University of Alberta

ON COMPASSION AND INTERSUBJECTIVITY

by

Ann Helen Chinnery

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

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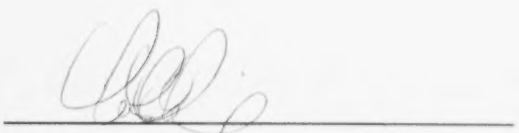

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June 25/96

University of Alberta

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **On Compassion and Intersubjectivity** submitted by Ann Helen Chinnery in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Philosophy of Education.

Dr. Eamonn Callan, Supervisor

Dr. Robert Burch

Dr. Wesley Cooper

June 6/96

ABSTRACT

While primarily the domain of phenomenologists, recent thought on intersubjectivity holds profound implications for moral philosophy -- particularly for the often neglected area of altruism in ethical conduct. Rooted in an inclusive understanding of human-being, and a notion of unconditional responsibility for the other, my primary concern in this thesis is to argue for compassion as a moral imperative. That is, to recognize the other as a fellow human being, I contend, is to recognize his or her suffering as one's own moral concern and responsibility. Citing the exemplary moral behaviour of the rescuers of Jews during the Nazi regime, I shall explore compassion in the context of a moral life, and suggest that sustained compassion (i.e., a sustained attitude of suffering-with-the-other) offers unique potential for the fully flourishing life. Finally, I shall return to the above concepts and consider compassion specifically as it relates to the moral education of children.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Recent writings on intersubjectivity suggest that "to face the face of the other is to be made to assume the posture of being for-the-other prior to being for-oneself" (Cohen, in Dallery & Scott, 1989, p. 40). This situation of essential obligation -- of putting oneself in a position of "ethical debt" to the other -- is clearly an issue of moral significance, and I suggest that such a notion offers unique potential for the fully flourishing life. Therefore, taking the term 'compassion' to mean 'suffering-with', my primary concern in this thesis is to make a case for compassion as a moral imperative in intersubjective relationship.

The complexities of intersubjectivity as a phenomenon of human-being (as explored in the work of Husserl, Heidegger, Levinas, Merleau-Ponty, Derrida, et al., and the recently translated *Cahiers* of Sartre) go far beyond the scope of this inquiry, so I will confine myself to the moral implications of intersubjectivity as it relates to compassion, and its potential as a framework for moral education.

In Chapter 2, I will explore the connected but distinct concepts of empathy and reciprocity as they relate to intersubjective relationship. Arne Vetlesen (1994) offers a compelling argument for empathy as the basic emotional faculty, which, as such, is "indispensable in the disclosure

of moral phenomena" (p. 12). In other words, he suggests, the ability to perceive something as morally significant -- in particular, the ability to perceive a situation as concerning the well-being and suffering of another -- is a complex interplay of emotion and reason which rests fundamentally on the faculty of empathy. He critiques ethics of love (in Scheler) and compassion (in Schopenhauer), both of which have been asserted as the basic human emotion, and finds them lacking. In light of the moral potential of intersubjective relationship, I suggest that Vetlesen's analysis of compassion reflects a somewhat limited interpretation. However, it is his main thesis -- that empathy alone provides "access to the domain of the moral" (Ibid., p. 7) and is the necessary precondition for moral perception -- that is most relevant to this inquiry.

There are several parallels between Vetlesen's understanding of empathy and mine of compassion, such as the recognition of the otherness of the other; the interpersonal dimension; the essential other-directedness, etc., but the terms are not interchangeable and, I maintain, neither are their moral implications. Agreeing that empathy enables moral perception -- enables me to feel-with the other -- I will suggest that compassion (as suffering-with) is the morally appropriate response to the now conscious shared pain of our existential incompleteness. While Vetlesen criticizes compassion's emphasis on the negative

(suffering), on my view it offers unique potential for mutual flourishing in the context of a moral life.

Any discussion of intersubjectivity implies an understanding of subjectivity -- of who or what inhabits the domain of subject. I am concerned here with subjectivity only as an expression of *human*-being, and my argument rests on a particular conception of that term. Cora Diamond's definition, i.e., a human being is "someone who has a human life to lead, as do I, someone whose fate is a human fate, as is mine" (in Cockburn, 1991, p. 59), works well with Emmanuel Levinas' understanding of human subjectivity as:

> a sensible, affective, working, speaking, and suffering body whose skin is the possibility of contact, proximity, and vulnerability and whose respiration is the dynamism of a moral inspiration and the expiration of someone who lives for others who may continue to live after one's death (Peperzak, in Dallery & Scott, 1989, p. 18).

The subject is the "I" who responds to the other who faces, and thus subjectivity is an essentially moral concern in that: "Finding myself facing another awakens me to *responsibility*: an infinite responsibility for the other, who is in need of everything that is necessary for a human life" (Ibid., p. 17). The intersection of Diamond's and Levinas' concepts marks the point of departure for this inquiry. For Levinas, and for me, the subject, the "I", is responsible for *any* other who "arises in front of me" (Ibid.), and it is a responsibility that comes not from my own free-will or choice, but, rather, as an existential

structure of being for-the-other that precedes even the awareness of my own being (Ibid.).

This understanding does not, on my view, narrow the realm of subjectivity to those capable of rational thought, as Kant's definition would require. Diamond's inclusion of those of limited mental capacity (and thus lacking rationality) as fellow human beings worthy of the concomitant role in moral thought may actually be seen to enhance Levinas' position. If another's particular "human life to lead" is marked by the deprivation of certain human capacities (whether situational or life-long), given that each person's life is a life *with* mine, all of us bound together (Diamond, in Cockburn, 1991a, p. 84), that other's vulnerability and suffering -- no less than the suffering of (rational) others -- demands from me a compassionate response.

Connected to the above, I contend that adherence to a contract notion of reciprocity (as set forth by Plato, Rawls et al.) is a morally limited position which ultimately constitutes a barrier to the pursuit of a virtuous life. The altruistic nature of compassion requires a profound sense of other-directedness that frequently exceeds a contract interpretation. Also, citing Lawrence Becker's detailed moral theory of reciprocity (1986), I will argue for an understanding of reciprocity as an ethical position of unconditional responsibility for the other (being for-the-

other) that arises from one's existential position of debt to the other.

In Chapter 3, I will engage an exploration of compassion, looking particularly at the work of Lawrence Blum, Carol Gilligan, Nel Noddings, Martha Nussbaum, and Arthur Schopenhauer. Stated very generally, I will use 'compassion' to mean the moral attitude or response of suffering-with that seeks to alleviate the suffering of another insofar as such suffering is perceived as diminishing the other's capacity to fully exercise and enjoy his or her subjectivity. Throughout this thesis I will use 'suffering' not only in its everyday sense, but also to refer to the pain that accompanies an acknowledgement of our basic condition of incompleteness (Nussbaum, 1990, p. 256). From time to time I will mention the Kantian approach, mostly (but not exclusively) for counterpoint to my argument, in which I hold both emotion and reason as necessary to morality and moral development.

Chapter 4 will be an exploration of how compassion fits into the larger context of a moral life. Consequently, I will be returning to the concepts of empathy and intersubjectivity outlined in Chapter 2 to construct a framework for moral perception and response. In their separate studies of rescuers of Jews during the Nazi regime, Blum (1994), Fogelman (1994), Monroe et al. (1990), and Vetlesen (1994) offer valuable insights into the nature of

exemplary moral behaviour which will serve as a model in my argument for compassion in intersubjective relationship.

Chapter 5 will address what it would mean to nurture the moral capacity for compassion in children. The question of whether virtue can be taught remains as much a topic of debate today as ever; however, moral education by its very nature seems to rest on an assumption that, at least in part, it can be, and that an education toward a virtuous life is a necessary component of a complete education. Consistent with Diamond's conception of a human being (in Cockburn, 1991), and the findings of Monroe et al. (1990), I will suggest that both a compassionate education and an education toward a compassionate life rest on deliberate cultivation of the notion of a common humanity and a concomitant self-perception; and that together these concepts inform what might be called an intersubjective pedagogy. Finally, citing Levinas, Nussbaum, Vetlesen, and various educational theorists, I will posit and briefly consider the implications of a direct connection between sustained compassion and the fully flourishing human life.

CHAPTER II

INTERSUBJECTIVITY, EMPATHY, AND RECIPROCITY

As noted in the Introduction, constraints of focus preclude a detailed exploration here of the phenomenological complexities of intersubjectivity; however, in order to construct a coherent argument for compassion as a moral imperative in intersubjective relationship, I need to consider its relevant moral aspects.

My point of departure is the intersection of Diamond's concept of a human being and Levinas' understanding of subjectivity (see Introduction, p. 3). It is significant that for Levinas, as for me, subjectivity is not a structure for itself; it is a condition of being for-another prior to being for-oneself (1985). While a lengthy discussion of metaphysics ought not to eclipse the central ethical concern of this inquiry, I need at this point to briefly outline a couple of ontological assumptions I hold.[1] Contrary to some notions of interrelatedness, in my understanding, intersubjectivity does not suggest a dissolution of discrete selves. Rather, it is characterized by the tension-of-being between unique agents who share the common bond of having a

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[1] The tension between metaphysics and ethics is addressed by Cohen (1985) in his question, "But is not ethics by nature metaphysical? Does it not depend on the essentially metaphysical distinction between 'what is' and 'what ought to be'?" (pp. 2-3). Like Levinas, my ethics rests upon, but is not limited to, a particular metaphysic of unconditional responsibility for the other (Ibid., p. 3). The implications of this conception in the context of a moral life will be elaborated in Chapter 4.

human life to live. Within this framework, responsibility toward others is not the result of free-will or choice; it is not an intention, but an intrinsic aspect of human-being. Such an assertion obviously has potent moral and ethical implications; and I propose that a fully flourishing human life, which I take to be a virtuous life, is the lived expression of a commitment to intersubjectivity: it is a life of unconditional responsibility for the other. Connected to this, I will suggest that intersubjective relationship is by nature non-symmetrical and thus requires a particular interpretation of reciprocity. Admittedly, these claims need much clarification and it is this to which I now turn my attention.

> We are all in life convinced that by opening our eyes and by listening we really do perceive other people. ...[that] we see a human being there -- not just colored patterns (Lingis, 1986, p. 73).

Contemporary phenomenologists have devoted much study to the subtleties of what it is to perceive the other as other, and moral philosophers are concerned with the inherent ethical implications of such perception. This marks a new emphasis on moral perception, an area previously overshadowed by theories of moral conduct which stressed intellection at the expense of perception. Lawrence Blum's *Moral perception and particularity* (1994), and Arne Vetlesen's *Perception, empathy, and judgment* (1994), are but two examples of this recent development in moral philosophy. Rather than espousing either side of the traditionally polarized emotion

vs. reason debate, these thinkers argue for the equal necessity of both, a position I share, and which is fundamental to the construction of my thesis.

EMPATHY

Vetlesen (1994) maintains that the ability to perceive the other, and to perceive the other's situation as one of moral consequence, is a complex interplay of emotion and reason uniquely made possible by the faculty of empathy. While empathy has long been considered primarily the domain of psychologists, Vetlesen suggests, perhaps due in part to the influence of psychoanalytic theory on phenomenology, that empathy enables and is the necessary precondition for moral perception, and is thus indisputably a philosophical concern.

Vetlesen's understanding of empathy is at once a subtle and radical departure from the psychoanalytic notion set out by Kohut, Fromm, et al.[2] The latter is significant in that the psychoanalytic emphasis on human relationship and incompleteness points to the essentially intersubjective nature of empathy, but beyond that the two interpretations differ greatly. Contrary to the psychoanalytic conception, for Vetlesen, and for me, the altruistic, *other*-directed nature of empathy is essential. In the discussion that

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[2] See Fromm, E. (1965). *Escape from freedom*. New York: Avon; and Kohut, H. (1971). *The restoration of the self*. New York: International University Press.

follows I will take empathy to mean the capacity to put oneself in the place of the other by way of, in Vetlesen's words, a 'feeling-into' and 'feeling-with' (1994, p. 8). More specifically:

> Empathy allows me to develop an appreciation of how the other experiences his or her situation; empathy facilitates the first reaching out toward and gaining access to the other's experience, but empathy does not imply that I become 'contaminated' by the other's emotional state; it does not mean that I myself come to feel what the other feels. I do not have to feel the other's feeling in order to grasp, and thereupon be able to judge in light of, how the other experiences the situation he or she is in. The feeling-with made possible by the faculty of empathy is no mere projection; it neither presupposes nor demands that the other be identical to myself. ...Empathy, in short, involves the recognition of the otherness of the other, yet it does not seek the enhancement of this otherness as an end in itself... (Ibid.).

Empathy also figures prominently in the work of Kristen Monroe (with Michael Barton and Ute Klingemann), John Deigh, and Martin Hoffman among others. Monroe et al. sought, through their study of rescuers of the Jews during the Holocaust, to understand altruistic behavior. They discovered that:

> [A] shared perception of themselves as part of a common humanity...seems to be what distinguishes rescuers from other individuals. It is what guides their actions in saving others. It is what limits their perceived choice options and makes their actions emanate from nonconscious sources (1990, p. 119).

This finding is pivotal in studies of both empathy and intersubjectivity in that one's identity construct is cited as the key element in moral perception and altruistic response. An essential characteristic of these rescuers,

sometimes referred to as "John Donne's people",[3] and, I contend, of other moral exemplars, is that they do not consider the individual to be basic. Rather, a recognition of the shared condition of human-being[4] and a perception of oneself therefore as one-in-relation, as part of a common humanity (as opposed to being constituted by ties of family, race, nationality, etc.), is what appears to motivate altruistic response.

Deigh, in his article on empathy and universalizability (1995), takes a perspective consistent with Monroe et al., focusing on one's perception of oneself, particularly in relation to others, as critical to altruistic behavior:

> The problem is that to see one's circumstances as relevantly similar to another's circumstances is already to be sensitive to the practical consequences of the comparison, for one cannot know which similarities are relevant and which differences are irrelevant without knowing what they are relevant and irrelevant to (p. 753).

In contrast, the egocentric agent, with his purely self-interested motives, does not see the effects of his actions on other people's lives as being as important as

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[3] Referring to Donne's "No man is an island, Intire of itself; every man is a peece of the Continent, A part of the Maine; If a clod bee washed away by the Sea, Europe is the lesse, as well as if a promonterie were, As well as if a Mannor of thy friends or of thy owne were; Any man's death diminishes me, Because I am involved in Mankinde; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee" (Devotions 17, quoted in Monroe et al., 1990). See also Fogelman (1994).

[4] See Blum (1980); Diamond (1991); Gilligan (1987); Levinas (1985); Lingis (1994); Noddings (1984); Nussbaum (1990); Peperzak (1989); Sartre (1992); Vetlesen (1994).

theirs on his own. An individual with the capacity for empathy, however, can take another's perspective and imaginatively participate in that other's life, but without forgetting himself (Ibid., pp. 758-759). This latter qualification differentiates empathy from emotional identification: it is the capacity to hold concurrent awareness of one's own subjectivity and that of the other, recognizing the other's freedom, purposes, and well-being as distinct from but of equal worth as one's own.[5]

Obviously, as Deigh points out, there are potentially many situations of conflict between one's own purposes and those of another, or which require empathy with more than one person. It is the ability to recognize and resolve such conflicts (in the case of the former, in favor of the other's purposes over one's own), he argues -- and not just seeing another's purposes as separate and worthwhile -- which marks mature empathy in moral judgment and response (Ibid., p. 762).

Martin Hoffman, who is well-recognized for his work on empathy, situates himself firmly in the utilitarian tradition (in Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987). He emphasizes the role of empathy in moral perception, positing a cause and effect link between empathy and moral principles. Hoffman suggests that initially moral principles are activated by

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[5] This particular aspect of empathy is addressed also in Noddings' concept of 'engrossment' (1984), and Gilligan's discussion of the attitude of 'engagement' (1987).

the aroused affect of empathy thereby creating a bond between the two which is strengthened in subsequent moral encounters. He furthers his argument by suggesting that once the bond is established, empathic response may be stimulated either by the aroused emotion, or that the empathic emotion (and response) can be aroused upon presentation of the moral principle in a controlled context. Hoffman's theory of a direct connection between moral emotions and moral principles has greatly influenced studies on the development of pro-social behaviour, and I will return to his analysis below, in Chapter 5, considering issues of moral education.

EMPATHY AND INTERSUBJECTIVITY

Heidegger, Levinas, et al. see the condition and experience of human-being as essentially one of being-with (*Mitsein*): it is an existential structure of being-for-the-other that marks every human life. Levinas claims that when one is addressed by another, by the vulnerability of the other's face, one finds in oneself an "infinite responsibility" for the other.[6] This responsibility is in no way a result of free-will or choice, but rather an essential characteristic of being human and of human-being. "The face of the other is a surface of suffering, upon which

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[6] See Levinas, E. (1969). *Totality and infinity*. (A. Lingis, Trans.) The Hague: Nijhoff; and Levinas, E. (1981). *Otherwise than being or beyond essence*. (A. Lingis, Trans.) The Hague: Nijhoff.

her sensitivity and susceptibility and her vulnerability and mortality are exposed to me" (Lingis, 1994, p. 131); and, as Cohen notes, "The face of the other is unique insofar as it makes claims on me that cannot be shirked without moral fault" (in Dallery & Scott, 1989, p. 43). This clearly supports my contention that one's subjectivity, the very essence of one's being human, holds an inherent responsibility for the other that extends to *any* other who faces.

Some moral philosophers argue for a definition of those for whom one is and is not responsible. Levinas cites Dostoyevsky in asserting that: "We are all responsible for all for all men before all, and I more than all the others" (1985, p. 99). It is precisely this claim to inclusiveness that Noddings rejects as "impossible to actualize" (1984, p. 18) and which, she says, leads to "abstract problem solving and mere talk" instead of real caring (see also Vetlesen, 1994). Noddings holds that the most one can do in terms of caring for all others is to "care about", i.e., "maintain an internal state of readiness to try to care for whoever crosses our path" (Ibid.), which, for her, is plainly not the same as caring.

I contend that Noddings approaches the problem from the wrong end (focusing on a preconceived notion of 'possible actualized caring') and thus arrives at an unnecessary distinction. While claiming an ethic grounded in essential

interconnectedness, it seems that by restricting her understanding of the 'one-caring' and the 'cared-for' (1984) to those who meet specific conditions of proximity, she artificially limits the potential for perceiving situations as being of moral concern, and consequently also limits the potential for altruistic response. On my view, confining one's responsibility to the subset of known others could easily slide into a justification for self-interest.

In what she calls the "legitimate dread of the proximate stranger" (Ibid., p. 85), Noddings argues that "an ethic of caring implies a limit on our obligation" (Ibid., p. 86), a limit defined by relation. My main objection is to her "criteria for moral obligation" based on the (assumed) possibility of completion in the other.[7] Noddings cites the example of starving children in Africa, to whom, because of the impossibility of completion, she claims to have no obligation (Ibid.). However, as Levinas insists, the proximity of the other does not reduce to the fact that the other is known to me (1985, p. 97). In her facing, she is my proximate other and my responsibility. Contrary to Blum (1980a), but consistent with Hoffman, I maintain that:

> [O]ne's moral principles...must be applied impartially -- to strangers as well as kin, to people who are absent as well as present, and to the future as well as the present implications of action (Hoffman, in Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987, p. 76).

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[7] See Noddings (1984, esp. pp. 46-48, 65-74, and 81-90).

Particularly in the work of Monroe et al. (1990), and Fogelman (1994), it appears that a perception of oneself as part of a common humanity, regardless of familial, political, religious, or national ties, is the key determinant in altruistic response. The significance of this is that empathy as a consistent capacity of the moral agent requires, among other things, an ability to perceive the other as a fellow human being: it is in the face of the other that I recognize both his humanity and my own.

Deigh also suggests that mature empathy requires the ability to distinguish relevant and irrelevant similarities and differences (1995, p. 753). As noted above in the Introduction, for Diamond, and for me, the fact of another's particular human life being marked by the deprivation of certain human capacities (such as being of limited mental ability) is an irrelevant difference. Likewise, differences of political affiliation, nationality, or race, which may render the other 'the enemy', are irrelevant in terms of that other's being human and my concomitant ethical obligation to him. As has been demonstrated time and again in studies of moral exemplars, it is not the possession of common particularities that marks the other as one-with-me (and therefore one to whom I have an ethical obligation), but rather, as Diamond says, the fact that he too has a human life to lead as do I, and that his fate is a human

fate as is mine (in Cockburn, 1991).[8] Our shared condition of human-being is the relevant similarity that binds me to the other in an essential relationship of intersubjectivity -- in a relationship of ethical debt to the other.

> There is a commandment in the appearance of the face, as if a master spoke to me. However, at the same time, the face of the Other is destitute; it is the poor for whom I can do all and to whom I owe all. And me, whoever I may be,...I am he who finds the resources to respond to the call. ... *I am I in the sole measure that I am responsible* (Levinas, 1985, pp. 89; 101, emphasis mine).

RECIPROCITY

Reciprocity has long played a complex and controversial role in moral theory; however, for the purposes of this inquiry, I will confine myself to two relevant aspects. First, as Becker makes clear, "reciprocity is a recipient's virtue" (1986, p. 93). It is not about how one feels or ought to feel when giving, but rather about how one ought to respond to others. In contrast to the contract notion of reciprocity (i.e., response in kind), set forth by Plato, Rawls et al., acts of altruism require that the moral agent be concerned primarily with the other, and not with what he or she will receive in return. At first glance this claim

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[8] One of the rescuers of Jews studied by Fogelman (1994) was sternly reprimanded by friends for picking up a German soldier he found bleeding in the road and taking him to hospital. Consistent with my understanding of empathy and moral perception, "[The rescuer] did not see a generic enemy. He saw a bleeding, young man, and he responded" (p. 82). See also Blum (1994); Monroe et al. (1990); and Vetlesen (1994).

might seem naive, or seem to suggest a denial or erosion of self-respect. As Fogelman notes:

> Altruistically inclined people are seen as weaklings, as 'do-gooders.' Psychoanalysts dismiss [altruism] as narcissism overlaid with rescue fantasies, or they assign it unconscious defenses such as the need for power or the need to be loved (1994, p. xix).

I contend, however, that with the tension of intersubjectivity, altruism (in both attitude and act) neither involves nor leads to self-sacrifice. On the contrary, altruism both requires and enhances one's essential subjectivity. Therefore, as with the egocentric agent,[9] neither is the one who has 'lost' or surrendered his subjectivity (and thus become an object for the other) capable of altruism.[10] In this conception, then, one is motivated to give not so that or because the other will reciprocate. One gives because one is capable of giving, and one gives so that the other might flourish.

Noddings' concept of reciprocity as 'completion', while clearly a non-contractual interpretation, still focuses considerable attention on the role and responsibility of the "cared-for" toward the "one-caring".[11] The stance I will take in the following discussion is thus a departure from both Noddings and Rawls.

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[9] See also Deigh (1995).

[10] More detailed discussions of altruism as a character trait (looking specifically at compassion) follow in Chapters 3 and 4.

[11] See Noddings (1984, pp. 69-74).

A defining feature of an altruistic attitude or act is its fundamental other-directedness. However, the capacity to be other-directed, as shown by Deigh (1995); Monroe et al. (1990); Noddings (1984); and Vetlesen (1994), seems to be rooted in a conception of oneself as part of a common humanity and therefore essentially as one-in-relation. Thus, while one's altruistic motivation is irreducibly other-regarding, it is seen to arise from a particular self-perception.[12]

In his argument for reciprocity as a fundamental moral virtue, Lawrence Becker proposes that:

> [W]e should return good for good, in proportion to what we receive; that we should resist evil, but not do evil in return; that we should make reparation for the harm we do; and that we should be disposed to do those things as a matter of moral obligation (1986, p. 4).

More specifically, for Becker, reciprocity is both the disposition to reciprocate and the acts such a disposition makes obligatory (Ibid., p. 170).

The second aspect of reciprocity relevant to this inquiry is what sparked Michael Ignatieff's collection of essays, *The needs of strangers* (1984), i.e., the question of moral obligation. Ignatieff asks whether there is a moral commitment, beyond social custom, habit, and historical inheritance, that binds strangers to one another in a relationship of obligation (p. 27). If indeed such a

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[12] The implications of this aspect of reciprocity as it relates to intersubjectivity will be outlined below and elaborated in Chapter 4.

commitment exists, he contends, it would have to rest on a shared idea of a "natural human identity" which overrides our seemingly infinite differences (Ibid., p. 28). In other words, there must be a universal condition of human-being that transcends the particulars of individual experience. This idea is obviously consistent with the conception of human-being held throughout this inquiry, but requires some careful consideration in terms of its relevance to reciprocity.

In the usual sense of the word, a situation of obligation implies a prior condition of indebtedness to another. But what of the stranger -- the other who faces me as other -- specifically, as one who is not socially related to me and who has not conferred on me identifiable goods for which I am obliged to reciprocate? What is the claim this other makes on me? Very generally, as Ignatieff says, it is "the indeterminate claim of one human being upon another" (Ibid., p. 29).[13]

The other's claim on me, and my concomitant responsibility for her, I suggest, is a claim that arises from our very nature as human beings. Consistent with Sartre (1956), and Nussbaum (1990), Ignatieff says that:

> To define human nature in terms of needs is to define what we *are* in terms of what we *lack*, to insist on the distinctive emptiness and incompleteness of humans as a

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[13] See also Anderson (1989); Cohen (1989); Levinas (1985); Lingis (1986, 1994); Luijpen (1969); and Peperzak (1989).

species (1984, p. 14).

Central to my thesis is an understanding of intersubjective relationship as a unique mode in which this condition of incompleteness can be addressed. I will argue that one's full flourishing as a human being is fundamentally dependent on fulfilment in another, and that this fulfilment could be seen as a particular form of reciprocity.

RECIPROCITY AND INTERSUBJECTIVITY

Levinas claims that intersubjectivity is essentially a non-symmetrical relation marked by unconditional responsibility for the other (1985, p. 98). Consequently, a discussion of reciprocity in this context will depart quite radically from the contractarian ideal. The position of ethical debt which characterizes intersubjective relationship, and which establishes one's being as a being for-the-other prior to being for-oneself, makes demands on one that apparently have nothing to do with the receipt of specific, quantifiable goods (or evil). As he says, "I am responsible for the Other without waiting for reciprocity, were I to die for it" (Ibid.).

Particularly when taken literally, there is a crucial distinction that needs to be made here. Throughout this inquiry I hold that subjectivity is essential to and characteristic of being human.[14] It follows then that

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[14] See also Hampton (1993).

subjectivity is also a fundamental requirement of the capacity for altruism. Subjectivity, however, ought not to be confused with comfort or even safety. Thinking, for example, of the rescuers studied by Fogelman (1994), and Monroe et al. (1990), there are situations of moral concern -- which invoke one's obligation to the other -- that may jeopardize one's comfort or physical safety. Obviously these situations require a strength of moral character infrequently called upon, but they exist nonetheless, and do demand a moral response. On the other hand, a situation in which responsibility toward the other seems to require relinquishing one's subjectivity is altogether different, and on my view incompatible with a morality that deeply values human flourishing. The inherent equality (of worth) of all human beings would clearly militate against sacrificing, in the name of altruism, the very thing that makes altruism possible in the first place.[15]

Perhaps a brief example will serve to illustrate this point. Let us consider the case of a woman who is in a brutally violent marriage. Her husband not only batters her regularly but even seems to derive pleasure from her suffering. Prolonged abuse has rendered this woman a rather pathetic and pitiable character; but despite repeated urging from family and friends she refuses to leave the marriage citing her husband's apparent inability to fend for himself

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[15] See also Badhwar (1993, pp. 116-117).

in matters of day-to-day concern.

In light of the concepts posited above, how would such a situation be seen in an ethic of unconditional responsibility for the other? At first glance, one might be tempted to praise the woman's selfless devotion and alleged promotion of her husband's good at her own expense as a laudable example of moral virtue, but on my view the situation bears no resemblance to genuine altruism. Having forfeited her subjectivity or agency -- in essence having surrendered her *self* -- this woman is quite simply incapable of altruism in either attitude or act. Also, while her condition of physical injury is perhaps the most visible sign, it is not the primary moral concern. Rather, it is the loss of agency which renders one or both parties an object for the other that characterizes this relationship as incompatible with both altruism and a morality that values human flourishing.[16] While I will not develop this point in detail here, I propose that careful examination of such relationships would in fact reveal an essential interobjectivity, i.e., the loss of subjectivity by one party effectively results in the objectification of both (or all). As Anderson says:

> If others become simply my servants or slaves, they are not able to offer me the meaning and value I desire, the affirmation of my being by free and independent

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[16] In my understanding, objectification is not limited to situations of abuse but also includes the idolizing or indiscriminate adoration of another.

subjects (in Dallery & Scott, 1989, p. 73).

Therefore, despite my earlier claim to non-symmetry and unconditional responsibility, sustained subjectivity as a requirement for altruism seems to suggest at least a qualified principle of symmetry. Just as my being for-the-other is a response to the other's suffering, I too (as one-in-relation) need the affirmation of another subject. In this sense, then, altruism is not purely unconditional. The other's claim on me and my response to her as a fellow human being and fellow subject hold an implicit expectation that she too will respond when and to the degree that she is able as one whose life is a being for-the-other prior to being for-oneself. Central to my argument, however, is a contention that this obligation is the other's to recognize and accept; it neither shapes nor limits my obligation to her. Thus I maintain that Levinas' claim to unconditional responsibility still holds.

To illustrate this point, consider now the husband from the above example -- an individual whose life could be characterized as little more than a series of violent and abhorrent acts toward others. Legal issues aside, what if any is my moral obligation to this other? Or has he, by his actions, effectively removed himself from the domain of the moral and thus forfeited his status as an object of moral concern?

According to Becker's understanding of reciprocity

(1986), I am compelled to resist evil but not do evil in return, and therefore the minimal moral response would be a position of non-maleficence. Secondly, just as my ethical debt to the other is not tied to the receipt of particular goods, neither is my responsibility a freely chosen posture of benevolence toward those I deem worthy. It is not the other's moral conduct that determines or negates his essential humanity and my concomitant obligation to him, but rather the fact that he is a fellow human being who, like me, "is in need of everything that is necessary for a human life" (Peperzak, in Dallery & Scott, 1989, p. 17). Admittedly, an ethic of unconditional responsibility is a demanding ethic; and yet, as Cohen suggests:

> Ethics is forceful not because it opposes power with more power..., but rather because it opposes power with what appears to be weakness and vulnerability but is responsibility and sincerity (1985, p. 13).

That said, what is it in the face of the other -- and in his facing -- that marks my life as one of essential obligation to the other? What is the existential debt I have incurred, and how ought I to reciprocate?

I propose that one's ethical obligation to the other is tied inextricably to the fact that *one is* at all. For Levinas, "[W]hat is most natural [being] becomes the most problematic" (1985, p. 121). In other words, there is always the question: "Do *I* have the right to be?" (Ibid., emphasis mine). Perhaps it is being itself -- and my being in particular -- that marks both the source and substance of my

debt to the other. What the other needs, what she lacks, is what she has given me. In allowing me to be,[17] the other has given me my subjectivity, and this position of essential debt to the other clearly calls for a moral response, for a particular kind of reciprocity.

As Becker would suggest, taking a somewhat contractual interpretation of reciprocity, I (as recipient) am morally obligated to be disposed to return good for good received. Therefore my being is necessarily a being for-the-other prior to being for-myself. In the face of the other I perceive at once both his vulnerability and his claim on me -- a claim that existential phenomenologists call the appeal to "be-with-me" (Luijpen, 1969, p. 313).[18] Lingis says that the face of the other does not seek from me a response of *doing* for him or her, but rather a *being* for-the-other. In the pain of incompleteness the other seeks contact and

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[17] For an extensive discussion on the power of 'the look' of the other, and one's being an object for the other, see *Being and nothingness* (Sartre, 1956). While asserting that intersubjectivity is what human beings continually seek, Sartre could never see the possibility of its realization, i.e., he was not able to resolve the subject-object dilemma in human relationship. However, in the recently translated *Notebooks for an ethics* (1992), Sartre re-opens the question and suggests a new interpretation, although, unfortunately, he does not develop it fully. In Levinas' analysis, which is more consistent with my own, it is the vulnerability of the face of the other that both appeals to me and forbids me to objectify the other. "[T]he face summons me to my obligations and judges me" (1991, p. 215).

[18] See also the various writings of Husserl, Lingis, and Merleau-Ponty.

accompaniment (1994, p. 132). It is an appeal to share in the other's subjectivity -- to be-together -- an appeal, that is, to intersubjectivity.

Thus, in agreement with Vetlesen, I would say that it is the faculty of empathy, in its complex interplay of emotion and cognition, that enables me to perceive the other as a fellow human being. And perceiving the one-who-faces as one-with-me, I recognize in the other the pain that accompanies our shared condition of incompleteness. In recognition of that suffering, my existential position of debt to the other is invoked and I am morally called to respond -- to suffer with the other. I am morally called to compassion.

CHAPTER III

COMPASSION

Before taking my argument any further, I need to explore compassion itself and its role in moral theory. The purpose of this chapter however is not to defend the importance of compassion relative to the other moral emotions, but rather to unfold the qualities which make it unique within that domain. To this end, I shall investigate compassion in the work of Lawrence Blum, Carol Gilligan, Nel Noddings, Martha Nussbaum, Arthur Schopenhauer, and, mainly for counterpoint, Immanuel Kant.

I will start by taking compassion to mean (very generally) the moral attitude of suffering-with that seeks to alleviate the suffering of another insofar as such suffering is perceived as diminishing the other's capacity to fully exercise and enjoy his or her subjectivity.

GILLIGAN

In her essay with Grant Wiggins on morality in early childhood (1987), Carol Gilligan gives considerable attention to the two different etymologies and thus interpretations of the word 'compassion'. She prefers to see 'passion' as feeling, as opposed to suffering, and therefore compassion as feeling-with or "co-feeling." Citing Milan Kundera's novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Gilligan suggests that it is in seeing compassion as co-feeling, and

not co-suffering, that it becomes "morally clear" (p. 288). Her distinction is based on a characterization of co-suffering as sympathy or pity,[19] which she says is an inherently unequal relationship in which one is "distant in the presence of another's feelings" (Ibid.). She also cites Kundera's assertion that compassion as co-suffering "connotes a certain condescension towards the sufferer" (Ibid.). Co-feeling, on the other hand, is paralleled to love, a relationship of attachment. On my view, however, a conceptual relation between co-suffering and condescension does not hold. The attitude of suffering-with that desires and seeks to restore the other's subjectivity points neither to condescension nor to a distancing of oneself from the other. Rather, it is an other-directedness which is deeply rooted in a perception of the other as a fellow human being and fellow subject, not an inferior object.[20]

If one then eliminates the attribution of condescension from co-suffering, it seems that Gilligan's separation of co-feeling and co-suffering is somewhat forced. Her premature polarization of suffering and feeling serves only to limit the moral potential of suffering-with and yet does

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[19] For a brief discussion on the differences between compassion and pity see the section on Blum, below.

[20] As Nussbaum notes, 'pity' has been tainted by condescension and superiority since the Victorian era (1996, p. 29). Therefore, other than in historical discussions, she uses the term 'compassion' which, on her view, and my own, does not suggest any such inequality between the sufferer and the compassionate one.

not convincingly render the other emotions encompassed by co-feeling any less susceptible to morally unworthy distortions (such as condescension).

Gilligan explains co-feeling as an experience of participating in another's feelings. This "attitude of engagement" (Ibid., p. 289) challenges traditional assumptions about self and other, suggesting a situation of neither detachment nor enmeshment. For Gilligan, detachment is not a sign of developmental maturity but rather a distancing of oneself from the other which renders genuine co-feeling impossible. With the connection of engagement, she says, one cannot easily turn away from another in need, nor can one live in "egocentric ignorance" (Ibid., p. 291). However, Gilligan's concept of engagement does not imply sameness in the Kantian sense; neither is it an "identity of feelings" or a "failure to distinguish between self and other" which would suggest enmeshment (Ibid.). Rather, engagement is a heightened concurrent awareness of both self and other.[21]

In her theory of moral development Gilligan adopts Kundera's notion of compassion, specifically that, "[T]o have compassion (co-feeling) means not only to be able to live with the other's misfortune but also to feel with him any emotion -- joy, anxiety, happiness, pain" (quoted in

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[21] As noted in Chapter 2, this attitude of engagement is similar to Noddings' concept of 'engrossment' (1984).

Gilligan, 1987, p. 288). She also clarifies the distinction between co-feeling, in which one can experience feelings that are different from one's own, and the traditional understanding of empathy which suggests that one feels the same as the other (Ibid., p. 287). However, by suggesting that compassion (as co-feeling) encompasses any emotion, she renders it much like Vetlesen's interpretation of empathy (see also Deigh, 1995; and Monroe et al., 1990). On my view there remain significant differences between the two, particularly in terms of the ethical implications.[22]

NUSSBAUM

Martha Nussbaum, in scattered sections throughout *Love's Knowledge* (1990), looks at how compassion unfolds into actual responsiveness to human suffering; and in her recently published article, "Compassion: The basic social emotion" (1996), she argues for compassion as the "essential bridge from self-interest to just conduct" (p. 57). She contends that the vivid imagination of another's reality which characterizes compassion ought to inform and underpin the current social institutions of moral and civic education, politics, economics, and the law (Ibid.).

On Nussbaum's view, direct perception of the other results in certain behaviour toward that other:

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[22] In Chapter 5, below, I will return to Gilligan's suggestions concerning the development of co-feeling in children.

> If you really vividly experience a concrete human life, imagine what it's like to live that life, and at the same time permit yourself the full range of emotional responses to that concrete life, you will (if you have at all a good moral start) be unable to do certain things to that person. Vividness leads to tenderness, imagination to compassion (Nussbaum, 1990, p. 209).[23]

Like Gilligan, Nussbaum connects compassion and love (Ibid., p. 210) and she raises an important relevant point in terms of love and perceiving the other. She suggests that when one sees the other "in all her tangled complexity," in a "fine consciousness of the particulars of the situation," and focuses on the other, a connection is made (Ibid.). While the other writers under consideration here do not specifically call this connection love, the suggestion would not be incompatible with their arguments. The salient point for all is that the connection is not new but rather a recognition of our primary relatedness which leads one to see the other humanely and thus be able to respond out of compassion.

Clearly, the role of love in morality is too vast to explore adequately here, so for the purposes of this inquiry I will confine myself to Nussbaum's assertion that:

> Human beings suffer, but they also know how to deal with suffering, and their morality is a response to the fact of suffering. Compassion...[is] an essential ingredient of any human justice (Ibid., p. 375).

Here she suggests an argument that is central to my thesis, i.e., that any encounter with another which evokes a

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[23] See also Vetlesen's concept of empathy (1994).

recognition of the other's suffering (as a particular manifestation of the shared suffering of human-being) calls for compassionate response. It is a suffering-with-the-other, motivated by a fundamental concern for the other (and not self-interest), that desires relief of such suffering in order that the other might flourish.

BLUM

Lawrence Blum (1980), like Nussbaum, focuses on a desire for the alleviation of another's pain or suffering as the primary characteristic of compassion. He differentiates compassion from other altruistic emotions such as helpfulness and well-wishing (Ibid., p. 507) which may focus on pleasure. While all share a concern for the good of others, it is compassion alone, he argues, that specifically addresses suffering.[24]

Throughout this inquiry I will hold to a characterization of altruistic emotions, including compassion, as fundamentally other-directed. The permissible degree of self-concern is open to some debate, but in order to be considered compassionate, an act or attitude must be primarily concerned with the other's good.

As Blum claims, if I am motivated to relieve or desire relief of another's distress primarily because of the

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[24] This view, which I share, contrasts Gilligan's (see above) in which compassion encompasses the co-feeling of any emotion.

realization that I too might fall victim to such a fate, I am not acting out of compassion because my motivation is self-regarding (Ibid., p. 511). For example, I (personally) could at some point be faced with the difficult decision of whether or not to terminate a pregnancy; however, my moral concern for those presently in that situation ought not to be primarily rooted in it being a possibility for me. Such self-concern -- whether present or projected -- as the principal source of moral motivation seems to me more characteristic of egoism than altruism. If the possibility of one's falling victim to a particular fate is what determines the extent of one's concomitant moral responsibility, it would follow that women past childbearing years and men would be excused and excluded from moral responsibility in situations concerning abortion -- a suggestion which is on my view both misguided and morally faulty. In Deigh's analysis (1995), as in mine, the experience of suffering would be the relevant similarity between oneself and the other, and the particulars of that suffering an irrelevant difference. By maintaining a conscious awareness of our shared humanity I am able to recognize that the other's suffering is a suffering that could happen to anyone (Blum, 1980, p. 511); it is simply a particular albeit unfortunate manifestation of the human condition.

As noted above in Chapter 2, perception of oneself as

part of a common humanity is seen to play a central if not determining role in moral perception and altruistic response (Deigh, 1995; Fogelman, 1994; and Monroe et al., 1990) and is thus crucial to the notion of compassion. If I disconnect myself from the other's suffering (and therefore from the other), seeing his distress as something that holds us apart from one another, my response to his suffering might be one of inappropriate blame or pity rather than compassion (Blum, 1980, p. 512).

However, the sometimes subtle differences between compassion and pity need to be fleshed out a bit here. Compassion, as I understand it, seeks to alleviate the suffering of another because and insofar as such suffering is seen to diminish the other's subjectivity and thus her capacity for fully flourishing as a human being. Compassion is the moral attitude that recognizes the distressing situation as a barrier to the other's flourishing, and not as an inherent quality of that other's being.

Pity, on the other hand, is called for in instances where the other's predicament has completely overwhelmed him, i.e., his distress is so great that it has (at least temporarily) divested him of his subjectivity. These situations are marked by an inherent asymmetry -- an unavoidable separation between subject and object. However, although the pitied one's agency may have been forfeited for a time, his humanness has not, and there is an ongoing

responsibility on the part of the pitying agent not only to relieve the other's suffering, but to desire and, when possible, seek the restoration of his potential for full flourishing.

To illustrate, suppose I come upon an act of racially motivated violence. While I might initially feel pity for the crumpled and beaten man lying on the ground, pity alone is clearly insufficient as a moral response. To simply walk away, shaking my head in dismay and sorrow at the poor man's misfortune of having been born black in an intolerant community is obviously indicative of some moral lack on my part. However, I would argue that it is also morally deficient to merely relieve the man of his immediate suffering (even if out of genuine concern for his well-being) while regarding his situation as an unfortunate but inevitable consequence of racial difference, i.e., failing to perceive as my concurrent moral concern the source of that suffering.[25] In other words, the issues which gave rise to this situation in the first place go beyond the immediate predicament of one individual, and thus my existential position of ethical debt to the other requires a deeper moral response. The vulnerability of the other does not call for my pity or condescension; his facing is both an

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[25] This example also highlights Nussbaum's distinction between the "vulnerabilities common to all human beings and those constructed for the powerless by the empowered" (1996, p. 41).

appeal to me and a command. In this case, for example, I would see a fully compassionate response as twofold. First, perceiving the other as a fellow human being and recognizing his distressing situation as being of moral concern, I am obligated to act to relieve his immediate condition of suffering in order that he might reclaim his essential subjectivity. Secondly, as one whose life is a being for-the-other prior to being for-myself, I am obligated (in both attitude and act) to remove, to the degree that I am able, such systemic and incidental barriers as allow the irrelevant difference of skin colour to prevent another's full flourishing.

This is where the distinction between Gilligan's understanding of 'co-suffering' (based on Kundera) and my own becomes more clear. Kundera says that co-suffering "connotes a certain condescension towards the sufferer" (quoted in Gilligan, 1987, p. 288) that creates a distance between oneself and the other. On my view however, like Nussbaum's, the shared condition of human-being is the shared condition of suffering in recognition of our existential incompleteness. Co-suffering, then, is marked by an irreducible connection to the other and not by a separation.

According to Blum, compassion requires a strength and endurance not necessary for the fulfilment of some other forms of altruism (1980, pp. 512-13). There is a similarity

here to Kant's qualification of 'steadfastness of character' in a life characterized by good will or moral action. On Kant's view, an attitude of virtue rests on respect for and obedience to the moral law; however, such an attitude can only be realized through the agent's moral fortitude in resisting opposing urges and inclinations (Louden, 1986, p. 477).[26]

At the end of his essay, Blum touches on the relationship between compassion and reason, and the often overstated division between the two:

> True compassion must be allied with knowledge and understanding if it is to serve adequately as a guide to action: there is nothing inherent in the character of compassion that would prevent -- and much that would encourage -- its alliance with rational calculation. ...A person who is compassionate by character is in principle committed to as rational and intelligent a course of action as possible (1980, p. 516).

In other words, one's moral perception, motivation, and acts ought to reflect a response based neither in mere sentimentality nor wholly in reasoned principle, but rather in an intelligent sensitivity to the other.

NODDINGS

Nel Noddings (1984) presents an alternative to ethics of principle by positing a "relation of natural caring" as

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[26] Kosman (1980) also notes that for Aristotle, as for Plato, the crucial question for moral philosophy is how one is to become the "kind of person for whom proper conduct emanates characteristically..." (p. 103). I will briefly consider compassion as a character trait below, and expand the notion in Chapters 4 and 5.

the basic human condition and thus the motivation for our morality (p. 5). While she never specifically addresses the issue of compassion, it is implicit throughout her work. An ethic of caring, by definition, requires a compassionate response to the extent that: "When we see the other's reality as a possibility for us, we must act to eliminate the intolerable, to reduce the pain, to fill the need, to actualize the dream" (Ibid., p. 14).

If, like Gilligan, one sees compassion as co-feeling, the connection to Noddings' ethic of caring is obvious, however, I suggest that an understanding of compassion as suffering-with is also generally compatible with an ethic of caring. For Noddings, compassion would comprise a particular response (act or attitude) to another's distress which, assessed as appropriate in the context of caring relation, can be deemed virtuous. I will depart somewhat from her analysis to suggest that compassion is a prior and sustained attitude of suffering-with that is manifested in caring relation.

Again, for the purposes of this discussion, I take as a starting point an interpretation of human suffering as the pain that accompanies an acknowledgment of our basic condition of incompleteness (Nussbaum, 1990, p. 256). This experience of suffering is clearly connected to Noddings' ethic of caring. She asserts that relation is ontologically basic, and that "human encounter and affective response" are

central to human existence (1984, p. 4). Our wholeness or integrity as persons, then, rests on fulfilment in and through another.

Compassion values and desires the flourishing of the other, and one's flourishing depends on one's freedom or autonomy (Callan, 1988, p. 4). However, caution is needed in connecting the notion of autonomy to Noddings' ethic of caring. Noddings adamantly rejects the liberal tradition of individualism but nonetheless has a very clear concept of 'self':

> I am not naturally alone. ...When I am alone, either because I have detached myself or because circumstances have wrenched me free, I seek first and most naturally to reestablish my relatedness. My very individuality is defined in a set of relations (1984, p. 51).

Thus, if autonomy is to have a place in an ethic of caring it must be more like the freedom of intersubjective relationship. Or, as Nussbaum interprets Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*:

> Confronted by the possibility of a solitary good life that does not, *ex hypothesi*, need other humans because it does not have the forms of dependency and neediness that lead humans to reach out for others, [Aristotle] simply refuses to allow that such a life could count as a completely *human* life. The self-sufficiency that a human ethics appropriately seeks is defined in Book I, as a self-sufficiency achieved in company with family, loved ones, and fellow citizens (1990, pp. 373-374).

If I as one-suffering (in recognition of my incompleteness) encounter another (perceiving him also as one-suffering), we meet each other as potentially autonomous subjects, and not as objects under one another's gaze. We

recognize that our incompleteness requires the fulfilment of relationship, and such a relationship could be characterized as one of suffering-with. This recognition or "reciprocal comprehension" (Sartre) frames my encounter with another such that my response to his distress will be consistent with the attitude of compassion. Since I hold freedom and autonomy in intersubjective relationship as necessary for full human flourishing, there arises in me a moral imperative to remove, to the degree that I am able, such obstacles as are preventing that flourishing.

Noddings and Blum both raise important points in terms of compassion and completion. Noddings uses 'completion' to mean "apprehension of caring by the cared-for" (1984, p. 65) such that caring is fulfilled in the other. It is a specific form of reciprocity or responsiveness linked to Aristotle's idea that "one process may find its actualization in another," e.g., teaching being completed in learning (Ibid., p. 69). The question of whether or not compassion requires completion is significant to understanding its role in human interaction. For Blum, compassion is both appropriate and possible in situations where one cannot actually alleviate the other's suffering (1980, p. 515). He cites compassionate concern for victims of incurable disease or of natural disasters too distant for direct relief on the part of the compassionate (Ibid., pp. 514-15).

Here, however, Blum and Noddings disagree. In the

latter's ethic of caring, the critical distinction is not whether or not the one-caring takes action to relieve the other's suffering. In fact, there may be situations in which a decision not to act is more consistent with concern for the other's good, such as choosing not to act in order to promote the other's independence or autonomy (Noddings, 1984, p. 11). That point notwithstanding, Noddings would clearly reject Blum's suggestion that the following state of mind could be seen as sufficient to constitute compassion: "concern involv[ing] sorrowing for the person, hoping that the condition might...be mitigated or compensated, [and] being pleased or grateful if this occurs" (1980, p. 515). While Blum maintains that it is not necessary for the object of compassion to be aware of his status as such (Ibid.), for Noddings this would be more indicative of 'caring about', which she says ought not to be confused with genuine caring (1984, p. 112).

Put simply, Blum's conception of compassion, like mine, does not require completion in the other whereas for Noddings it does. In noting this difference, however, it is important to maintain the distinction between compassion and caring. While Noddings' ethic is helpful to this inquiry, I am not primarily concerned here with caring as such, and it may well be that a fully developed ethic of caring requires the notion of completion while compassion does not.

SCHOPENHAUER

Arthur Schopenhauer is one of the most well known if controversial writers on compassion. Briefly, his position is that compassion is "the only genuine moral motivation" and that which makes the other virtues possible (Hamlyn, 1980, p. 134). That is: "Only insofar as an action has sprung from compassion does it have moral value; and every action resulting from any other motives has none" (Schopenhauer, 1994, p. 204). This statement rests on a claim that moral worth is the absence of all egoistic motivation, and that egoism and moral worth are mutually exclusive (Hamlyn, 1980, p. 134). However, although my purpose in these pages is to argue for compassion as a moral imperative, Schopenhauer's interpretation and my own diverge on at least one significant point.

The salient distinction is that, on my view, human-being is characterized by an original intersubjectivity whereas for Schopenhauer the individual is basic. In Schopenhauer's conception, then, compassion requires a metaphysical transcendence of the gap between individuals whereby the agent abandons egoism and takes on the suffering of another as he would his own, and *thus* desires to prevent or alleviate such suffering (Schopenhauer, 1994, pp. 203-205). Schopenhauer does not suggest, however, that identity with the other results in feeling the other's suffering in one's own person, but rather that in order for the other's

suffering to become one's immediate moral concern, the perceived difference between oneself and the other must be eliminated (Ibid.). A serious limitation of his account, as I understand it, is that compassion could presumably be aroused only for persons and situations in which one is able, imaginatively, to project oneself. My own position, on the other hand, holds no such requirement of (real or potential) sameness.[27]

COMPASSION AND CHARACTER

To consider compassion a character trait requires a shift in focus from consequence-centered to agent-centered motivation (Blum, 1994, p. 125). It is to see compassion as an enduring state of mind which disposes the moral agent to relieve or desire relief of another's suffering out of concern for the other's good and not out of self-interest.

Throughout this thesis I hold to a conception of the good that includes the full flourishing of all human beings and a belief in the fundamental equality of worth of all persons. It follows then that on my view a compassionate person is one who is disposed to alleviate another's suffering in circumstances which are perceived as diminishing that other's subjectivity and thus his potential for flourishing. The tension of intersubjectivity (which is

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[27] See also the section on Blum, above, for a related discussion.

also marked by an essential responsibility for the other) is, I suggest, what the compassionate one values and therefore what he or she will seek to restore.

Compassion requires that one act primarily out of other-directedness and not out of self-concern, however, as I argued above in Chapter 2, this ought not to be confused with a loss or sacrifice of self. To be of compassionate character requires both a sustained sense of oneself and one's agency, and an enduring concern for the well-being of others (see also Ibid., p. 126fn).

This 'steadfastness of character' is perhaps most apparent in situations in which compassion demands that one act contrary to one's inclinations. As Blum states:

> As a trait of character compassion can be as stable and consistent in its prompting of appropriate beneficent action as a conscientious adherence to principles of beneficence. ... Though compassion is a type of emotion or emotional attitude,...the regard for the other's good which compassion implies means that one's compassionate acts often involve acting very much contrary to one's moods and inclinations. Compassion is fundamentally other-regarding rather than self-regarding; its affective nature in no way detracts from this (1994, p. 180).

Kant, on the other hand, argues for adherence to the moral law as the sole determinant of virtuous action, even (or especially) in situations where one's urges and inclinations are to the contrary; and based on this he has come to be seen as the "enemy of emotions" (Louden, 1986, p. 486). His well known argument is that dutiful obedience to the law is necessarily primary in moral motivation:

> [I]t becomes all the more difficult to ascertain the true motives of action when, in addition to acting out of respect for the law, one also has a natural desire to act in the same manner as duty requires (Ibid., p. 487).

However, Louden suggests that even for Kant reason alone may not be sufficient to constitute virtue. Although Aristotle plainly argues for a harmony of reason and desire, seeing both as crucial aspects of moral motivation (Ibid.), Kant is decidedly more reticent in any discussion connecting desire and moral behaviour. The risk, it seems, is the potential for an ethics based on emotional urges, which to Kant is the very antithesis of moral behaviour or virtue. However, as Blum suggests, to understand compassion as a moral emotion is in no way to advocate an ethics based on mood or inclination (1994, p. 180). Rather, Blum addresses the possible tension between motivations of desire and duty, suggesting that in terms of moral motivation compassion as an attitude or emotion is no less demanding than ethics of principle (Ibid.).

Louden goes on to note that in Kant's later writings he "explicitly asserts that the emotions have a necessary and positive role to play in moral motivation" (1986, p. 487), but that their role is of a very specific nature. Kant says we need to "cultivate an 'habitually cheerful heart' in order that the feeling of joy accompanies (but does not constitute or determine) our virtue" (Ibid., p. 488). In other words, a genuinely virtuous life is one that is marked

by "a heart which is happy in the performance of its duty (not merely complacent in the recognition thereof)" (quoted in Louden, 1986, p. 488).

Thus, as with moral perception, it seems that moral motivation is best expressed as a complex interplay of emotion and reason.[28] On my view, it is precisely the tension between the two (much like the tension of intersubjective relationship) that marks both the locus and form of moral motivation and response. However, the significance of these concepts becomes clear only in light of actual experience; therefore the following chapter will be devoted to exploring the implications of compassion in the larger context of a moral life.

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[28] See also Blum (1980a, 1994); Nussbaum (1996); and Vetlesen (1994).

CHAPTER IV

COMPASSION IN THE CONTEXT OF A MORAL LIFE

> It might astonish some that -- faced with so many unleashed forces, so many violent and voracious acts that fill our history, our societies and our souls -- I should turn to the *I-Thou* or the responsibility-of-one-person-for-the-other to find the categories of the Human (Levinas, 1994, p. 42).

Like Levinas, I too contend that it is in this domain, i.e., in a lived ethic of unconditional responsibility for the other, that full human flourishing is uniquely made possible.[29] As I proposed at the outset, inherent to such an ethic is the moral attitude of compassion, of suffering-with the other; and, as above, I will use 'compassion' here to mean a way of being (in both attitude and act) that seeks to alleviate the suffering of another insofar as such suffering is perceived as diminishing the other's capacity to fully exercise and enjoy his or her subjectivity.

In making a case for compassion as a moral imperative, my purpose in this chapter is twofold: 1) to explore compassion as a trait of character; and 2) to look at acts of compassion -- usually in response to a particular (often short-lived) situation -- in a life that could otherwise be characterized as morally unremarkable or, in some cases, even morally ambiguous.

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[29] While recognizing the importance of the other moral virtues (such as courage, temperance, etc.) in a fully flourishing life, I propose that there is a unique and significant sense in which sustained compassion makes flourishing possible.

For consistency and simplicity I will adopt Blum's use of the terms moral 'saint' and moral 'hero' (1994) -- the former referring to those whose life (in both attitude and act) could generally be characterized as morally virtuous, and the latter referring to those who exhibit (an) extraordinary act(s) of moral virtue in the course of a life not usually marked by such behaviour.[30] Among the complex traits that distinguish the moral saint from other moral agents, there are three salient (and minimally context-dependent) characteristics I consider particularly worthy of further discussion: congruence, consistency, and constancy.

I will begin by recalling Diamond's definition of a human being as "someone who has a human life to live, as do I, someone whose fate is a human fate, as is mine" (in Cockburn, 1991, p. 59). This conception, combined with her insistence on an inherent and inescapable moral concern for all who share the condition of human-being, suggests a pre-ontological ethic[31] which she does not specifically articulate, but which I will attempt to develop below by sketching a somewhat tentative profile of one particular

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[30] Blum (1994, pp. 65-97) presents a detailed and most helpful examination of several types of moral exemplars (heroes, saints, idealists, and responders) which I will not repeat here. See also Slote (1992) on saints and heroes.

[31] I use the metaphysical term 'pre-ontological' here in the sense that Levinas uses it -- as primarily concerned with radical ethical inquiry into intersubjectivity -- and not in the Heideggerian sense, which emphasizes "Being itself."

kind of moral saint whom I will call the "compassionate one".[32]

THE SPHERE OF MORAL OBLIGATION

In their study of rescuers of Jews during the Nazi regime, Monroe et al. (1990) found the sole unifying characteristic of these moral exemplars to be a sustained "perception of themselves as part of a common humanity" (p. 119).[33] As discussed above in Chapter 2, and consistent with Diamond's interpretation (1991), it is not the possession of common qualities or characteristics that marks the other as one-with-me, but simply our shared condition of human-being. This position, which is central to my argument, is also closely tied to a particular understanding of the notion of proximity which in turn shapes my understanding of moral obligation. Like Diamond and Levinas,[34] I maintain that in the domain of human-being "proximity does not take

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[32] Related to Footnote 29, it is not my intention here to argue for the 'compassionate one' as being more or less morally exemplary than those who possess and display excellence in the other virtues (such as courage, patience, other forms of altruism, etc.), but rather to move toward an understanding of the unique qualities of sustained compassion (as suffering-with the other) in a moral life that deeply values the flourishing of all human beings.

[33] See also Blum (1994); Fogelman (1994); and Vetlesen (1994).

[34] See also Lingis (1994); and Luijpen (1969). For a more traditional approach to proximity and relations of moral obligation, see Blum (1980a); Noddings (1984); and Vetlesen (1994).

its meaning from the spatial metaphor of the extension of a concept" (Levinas, 1994, p. 124); the bond of shared human-being points to a connection that transcends any notion of sameness. Proximity prefigures one's existence, and the fact of the other's being human marks him already as an object of one's moral concern and as one's responsibility. One does not choose to extend such consideration to the other any more than one has chosen the existential fact of his (or one's own) humanity.

For Merleau-Ponty, the sensed experience of 'double touching' (of one hand touching the other in which each hand touches and is touched, feels and is felt) most clearly represents the relationship of intersubjectivity (1964, p. 167). However, such relationship is neither the union of parts of a whole nor one in which the other is perceived as an extension of oneself. Each hand, while sharing the common bond of being a hand, is discrete; each is other to the other. Yet, recalling the sensation of double touching, one can readily see how each hand's full (sensory) potential can only be realized in contact with another. Extending this analogy to human relationship, I propose that one's full flourishing as a human being rests on fulfilment in another subject.[35] Just as the hand that never touches cannot know what it is to be touched, so too is egoistic isolation fundamentally crippling to human-being.

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[35] See also Anderson (in Dallery & Scott, 1989, p. 73).

This suggestion finds support in David Wong's essay (in French et al., 1988), in which he argues for a virtue ethics arising directly out of a view of human nature as inherently relational. He posits that effective agency, which is commonly regarded as essential to any form of flourishing, requires nurturing relationships with others that involve trust and reciprocal duties (pp. 334-335), and asserts that one simply cannot flourish in the absence of such relationships. It is important to note, however, that, fully fleshed out, Wong's thesis might in fact bear a stronger resemblance to Noddings' view, i.e., human-being as essentially relational, but without the notions of pre-ontological proximity and unconditional responsibility for the other which I espouse. That point notwithstanding, what is significant to this discussion is Wong's suggestion that full human flourishing is irreducibly dependent on intersubjective relationship.

As discussed above in Chapter 2, I concur with Vetlesen's argument for empathy as the basic emotional faculty and the necessary precondition for moral perception (1994). Indeed, it seems that only in seeing the other as a fellow human being is one able to perceive his suffering as one's moral concern and one's responsibility. Therefore, from this point on, any discussion of compassion assumes empathic moral perception whereby the other's situation of suffering is correctly understood to be one's moral concern

and responsibility, i.e., that compassion (and not some other action or attitude) is the most appropriate moral response.

CONGRUENCE

For Monroe's rescuers and other moral saints, the identity construct of being part of a common humanity is fundamental and morally binding; it does not expand their perceived options in a situation of moral concern, but rather seems to preclude any conscious decision-making process on their part (Monroe et al., 1990). In other words, for the moral saint, his (virtuous) response is the only one possible for him.[36] He recognizes the naked and destitute face of the other as an appeal to his existential position of unconditional responsibility for that other, and he recognizes the unique and non-transferable responsibility that both arises from and finds fulfilment in his unique subjectivity, and finds he cannot shrink from it (Levinas, 1994).

As Nancy Sherman notes (in French et al., 1988), there is a tension concerning the perceived role of the moral agent in altruistic acts (p. 110). The magnanimous person,

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[36] Those seen as moral heroes, on the other hand, may not respond in a consistently morally virtuous manner throughout their lifespan; however this difference diminishes neither the impact nor the admirability of the hero's virtuous act when it does occur. This and other distinctions between moral heroes and saints will be elaborated below.

who chooses -- even if unconsciously -- only to engage in beneficent acts for which he will be considered virtuous, might rightly be seen as somewhat morally lacking. On the other hand, as one's primary motivation, a desire that the other be helped (and not that *I necessarily* be the one who does the helping) is arguably more characteristic of genuine altruism than the (albeit subtle) self-focus of the magnanimous agent.[37] In the case of the rescuers (with the exception of those involved in organized political networks), few sought out their charges; most were approached for help and they responded (Fogelman, 1994; Monroe et al., 1990; Oliner & Oliner, 1988). There was little or no desire to be viewed by others as virtuous, or even to be visibly connected to the beneficent act -- a further indication, according to Sherman, of the strength of their other-directed motivation (in French et al., 1988, p. 110). This is the sense in which I take Levinas' argument for one's unique and non-transferable responsibility for the other; it is a response to the other's facing and a response to the moral imperative weighing on one from the core of one's identity.

However, an ethic of unconditional responsibility for the other may result in emotionally painful decisions for the moral agent in which his or her loved ones are placed at

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[37] See also Badhwar (1993, pp. 112-113); and Monroe et al. (1990, p. 110).

serious risk in order to meet the (more urgent) needs of a stranger. In *From morality to virtue* (1992), Michael Slote argues that one might well question the relative moral admirability of such a stance (pp. 153-154). In other words, is a willingness to sacrifice one's own well-being, or the well-being of one's family or friends, for that of a stranger, necessarily a virtue? This is a complex and difficult question.[38] As Fogelman and Monroe et al. discovered, even upon reflection -- and "with the same feelings of inner conflict they underwent at the time" -- the rescuers maintain they could not, and indeed would not, have acted otherwise (Fogelman, 1994, p. 229).[39] For these rescuers, more morally binding than the question of whether one ought to risk one's own life (or that of a spouse or child) for the life of a stranger, is the question, "Can I live with myself if I say no?" (Ibid., p. 60).[40]

Leaving aside for the moment the much-debated issue of spheres of moral obligation, the concern Slote raises is an interesting one. He suggests that those agents who (like the rescuers) are devoted to a common humanity are "also

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[38] Badhwar (1996) and Noddings (1984), among others, argue that one's special relationships of care demand different moral obligations than what is owed to all others. My own position, however, is more consistent with Levinas et al., i.e., moral responsibility based on an inclusive notion of pre-ontological proximity, as discussed above and in Chapter 2.

[39] See also Monroe et al. (1990).

[40] See also the discussion on constancy, below.

supposed to have an incapacity for forming close attachments" (1992, p. 153).[41] Given that love and intimacy are highly valued aspects of being fully human,[42] Slote concludes that neither the disposition toward "general benevolence" nor the "disposition to form friendships and act (only) on behalf of one's friends" ranks definitively higher than the other on the moral scale (Ibid., p. 154).[43]

I would argue that those moral agents who are genuinely capable of general benevolence are already capable of love and intimacy, i.e., that the capacity for forming close, loving attachments is actually a precondition for their ethic and not a capacity they lack. Particularly, then, for the generally benevolent agent (whose morality requires a compassionate response to stranger and loved one alike),[44] Slote's point serves to highlight the intractability of

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[41] Intuitively, I am inclined to disagree with Slote's characterization, and have found no clear substantiation in documentation of the lives and personalities of adult rescuers (in Blum, 1994; Fogelman, 1994; Monroe et al., 1990; Oliner & Oliner, 1988). However, child rescuers (now adults), exhibit diverse responses to their rescuing years, and the difficulty for some in forming trusting, intimate adult relationships (which may or may not be causally related to their 'rescuer selves') (Fogelman, 1994, pp. 226-227) calls at least for further consideration of this question in terms of virtue ethics.

[42] See also Wong (in French et al., 1988, pp. 334-335).

[43] See also Blum (1980a; 1994).

[44] See also Nussbaum (1996, p. 48), where she argues that Kant's requirement of impartiality and universality actually furthers the case for the moral emotion of compassion, although for entirely different reasons than he puts forth.

situations in which one is morally compelled to respond, but in which *any* response will unavoidably result in the suffering or endangerment of another.[45]

Among the essential elements of full subjectivity are the self-esteem and confidence required for effective agency (Wong, in French et al., 1988, p. 332).[46] For the moral saint, this means a sustained identity within which may be found a "reasonable degree of congruence among its component desires, goals, character traits, and normative beliefs" (Ibid., p. 331). In other words, one ought to form commitments and ends that are congruent with one's traits, and insofar as character traits can be developed or altered, such change should be toward increased congruence with one's ends (Ibid., p. 333). An obvious example is the rescuers Fogelman calls "concerned professionals" (1994, pp. 193-202). For these individuals (including lawyers, doctors, nurses, and diplomats), the suffering Jews were "clients in trouble, patients in need, [and] strangers in distress in a foreign land" (Ibid., p. 193); therefore the confidence and competence their rescue activities required were already well established.

However, for many other rescuers, the situation

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[45] See Monroe et al. for a tragic example from the life of German rescuer, Margot, whose fiance was beaten to death by the Gestapo because of his genuine ignorance of her rescuing activities (1990, p. 113fn).

[46] See also Badhwar (1993, pp. 99-100).

frequently demanded skills and resources they were not even aware they had, and confidence often wavered. Nonetheless, the companion traits of consistency and constancy ensured that they persevered. The story of Alex Roslan (in Fogelman, 1994, pp. 104-117) is a striking study of this latter type of rescuer, and provides a particularly compelling example of the 'compassionate one'.[47]

Briefly, then, the effective agency which is characteristic of the moral saint reveals a relatively high degree of self-knowledge manifested in congruence between his or her traits, beliefs, and desired ends;[48] and the importance of congruence in the character of the moral saint is no more evident than in Monroe et al.'s summary of their findings:

> [W]e would argue that if one conceives of oneself as a certain kind of individual, then decisions become less choices between alternatives and more a recognition, perhaps an inner realization, which reflects a statement of who one is at the most fundamental level of self-awareness. This self-recognition involves an

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[47] Roslan and his wife, Mela, took in three young Jewish boys (brothers) for the duration of the war. One of the brothers died, despite heroic efforts on the part of Roslan's son, Jurek; and Jurek himself was later killed by gunfire during the Polish Uprising. Roslan also lost his livelihood and his home, later to wander for months in the countryside, evading authorities, with Jacob (whose appearance would have instantly revealed his Jewish heritage). The Roslans and their charges survived several house raids by Nazi soldiers only because of Alex's quick thinking and ingenuity. See also Blum's description of French rescuers Andre and Magda Trocme (1994) each of whom uniquely exemplifies the traits of the 'compassionate one'.

[48] See also MacIntyre (1981, p. 225) where he connects self-knowledge to (the virtue of) constancy.

> acceptance that only certain options are available to one because of this perception of self (1990, p. 122).

CONSISTENCY

Another quality that distinguishes moral saints from other agents (and even from other moral exemplars such as moral heroes) is the trait of consistency, which I will use here to mean moral conduct that consistently reveals a conscious awareness of one's existential position of ethical responsibility for the other.[49] For the moral saint, each encounter with another is already an ethical encounter and invokes her position of unconditional responsibility for that other.[50] In the case of the compassionate one, each encounter with another is an encounter of suffering-with that other; there is a recognition of the pain of

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[49] A contrasting (and more traditional) view of consistency can be found in Kantian ethics, i.e. (as characterized by Blum), "[i]n acting from universal principle on a certain occasion one commits oneself to *acting the same way* in similar situations in the future" (1980a, p. 110, emphasis mine). The important distinction between Kant's position and my own is that, as I see it, a sustained awareness of one's ethical responsibility for the other demands that one consistently respond in a morally virtuous way, but it also implies that one's response will reflect the particular needs of a particular other in a given situation of moral concern.

[50] Obviously, there is a practical distinction between a pre-ontological ethic which sees all human engagement as inherently ethical, and a specific situation of moral concern. The following discussion acknowledges the co-existence, throughout the course of a human life, of both existential suffering (in recognition of our basic condition of incompleteness) and situations of immediate physical or emotional distress.

existential incompleteness and a recognition that one's full humanness requires the ethical relationship of being-together, of intersubjectivity.

For the purposes of this discussion, consistency is closely tied to the trait of constancy (see below) in that the moral agent's commitment is to "virtuous ends of character" (Sherman, in French et al., 1988, p. 98), not to specific predetermined actions; however, neither is it a commitment to "striving for moral perfection," as Susan Wolf suggests (1982). Adherence to a view of oneself as part of a common humanity and acting from that position is in no way the same as holding oneself up as a moral exemplar.[51]

Regarding consistency, as Blum states (contrary to Kant), compassion as a trait of character can be equally stable, consistent, and demanding as adherence to moral principles (1994, p. 180). To call someone a compassionate person is to say that he acts from a consistently compassionate motivation (1980a, p. 111), and "an established pattern of sympathetic or compassionate action in someone does give us grounds to expect such action in the

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[51] Indeed, as Blum notes, self-righteousness itself is a moral deficiency and not a mark of the morally excellent (1994, p. 93). For most of the rescuers, public acknowledgment of their beneficent actions was an unwanted source of attention rather than a source of pride. They generally viewed their acts as morally unremarkable and their lives as not particularly worthy of recognition (Blum, 1994; Fogelman, 1994; Monroe et al., 1990; Oliner & Oliner, 1988). However, denial of their own moral sainthood does not affect the appropriateness of its attribution to these individuals.

future" (Ibid., p. 112).

Another feature of consistency that distinguishes the moral saint from the moral hero is that heroism allows for a time limitation whereas moral sainthood does not (Blum, 1994, p. 78).[52] The life of rescuer Oskar Schindler provides a clear example of this difference. As Blum recounts,[53] Schindler's actions on behalf of the Jews (which resulted in thousands of lives being saved) was tied to a particular moral project and lasted only the duration of the war. Further, Schindler's ongoing moral ambiguity (evidenced by sexual infidelity, excessive drinking, etc.) -- while not undermining the moral virtue of his heroic acts -- suggests an inconsistency for which he might more accurately be seen as a moral hero than a saint.[54]

Magda Trocme, on the other hand, exemplifies the sustained virtue of a moral saint. As Blum says:

> Magda had a clearer and more consistent moral self-identity than did Schindler. The traits of character (compassion, caring, courage, understanding of individual needs) which constituted her form of responsiveness were more deeply rooted in her character than were Schindler's morally heroic traits within his (1994, pp. 86-87).[55]

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[52] See also Sherman (in French et al., 1988, p. 99).

[53] Based on Keneally (1982).

[54] See Blum's extensive discussion of Schindler's life in which he addresses the effect of morally unworthy desires on the perceived overall virtue of the agent (1994).

[55] Obviously, in attempting to discern the various types of moral agents, distinctions are most evident in

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Perhaps Neera Badhwar's analysis of the rescuers[56] most clearly captures an understanding of the notion of consistency as commitment to virtuous ends of character. She argues that the salient aspect of the moral lives of the rescuers was their intense engagement in affirming the humanity of the Jews in the face of dehumanization by the Nazis, and that their compassion came "from a sense of their oneness with Jews as human beings" (1993, p. 99).[57]

CONSTANCY

In his discussion concerning the virtues and the unity of a human life (in *After Virtue*, 1988), Alasdair MacIntyre focuses considerable attention on the character trait of constancy or integrity (pp. 189ff). Citing Jane Austen, MacIntyre suggests that constancy requires "a recognition of a particular kind of threat to the integrity of the personality in the peculiarly modern social world" (Ibid.,

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(...continued)
dramatic examples. However, it ought not to go unmentioned that those agents whose sustained virtue appears to be confined to a limited sphere (such as family or community), may, depending on other relevant factors, also be considered moral saints, i.e., the relative scope of one's moral actions is not necessarily the key determining factor in assessing that moral life. See Blum (1994); and Sandel (1982).

[56] Badhwar cites the work of Monroe et al. (1990); and Oliner & Oliner (1988) for her discussion.

[57] See also Vetlesen (1994).

p. 225).[58] The traits of constancy and consistency (as discussed above) are closely related, yet distinct. On my view, consistency focuses on a coherent relationship between character and conduct, and thus inconsistency could result, for example, from a certain weakness of will. Constancy, on the other hand, refers more to a stability of character or fidelity to the moral self over time. A lapse from constancy, then, (which I perceive as ultimately more serious than incidental inconsistency) is a kind of fragmentation of consciousness. To illustrate, Vetlesen cites the example of SS officer Adolf Eichmann.[59] Vetlesen suggests that Eichmann's primary moral failure was a failure of constancy. That is, his dehumanization (and consequent treatment) of the Jews was made possible only by the prior surrender of his moral self (in this case, to a larger institutionalized ideology) (1994, pp. 86-115); and, on Vetlesen's view, as on my own, to sacrifice constancy is to sacrifice the kind of autonomy and subjectivity necessary for full human flourishing (Ibid., pp. 111-112).[60]

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[58] Clearly, as a trait to be admired, constancy refers to the virtuous agent and not the morally corrupt. See also Blum (1994, p. 78).

[59] Vetlesen's analysis, with which I concur, is a significant departure from Hannah Arendt's well known work on Eichmann. For Arendt's view, see esp. *The origins of totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1951.

[60] See Vetlesen (1994, esp. Ch. 2, 4, and 5), in which he develops this suggestion and its moral implications more fully.

Unlike the altruistic acts of the moral hero (which may be motivated by a deeply-held moral commitment invoked in specific situations), the virtuous actions which characterize the life of the moral saint cannot typically be traced to a set of moral principles and concomitant duties (Blum, 1994, p. 76).[61] Rather, the moral saint's morality is tied inextricably to a self-perception as part of a common humanity and a perception of the other as one-with-her, who (like her), requires everything that is necessary for a human life.

It is also significant to note that while a moral hero's actions usually demonstrate having overcome some risk or adversity, the moral saint's activities may not show evidence of such. However, at least in some cases, this difference simply points to the strength of the moral saint's identity such that she does not perceive her actions as extraordinary and, if pressed, will insist that she had no choice but to act as she did.[62] Her moral virtue is more appropriately seen as a function of constancy of character than of specific actions, although obviously, throughout the course of her life, her way of being-with-others will also

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[61] See also Fogelman (1994); and Monroe et al. (1990).

[62] See also Blum (1994); Fogelman (1994); Monroe et al. (1990); and Oliner & Oliner (1988).

testify to consistently virtuous behaviour.[63]

MORAL HEROES

While some traits of the moral hero have been addressed above as they contrast with those of the moral saint, to me the hero's unique moral response clearly warrants further discussion, particularly in terms of moral motivation.

I have characterized the moral saint as one whose being is a being for-the-other prior to being for-oneself -- a life of sustained virtue. As such, one can presumably anticipate from her a consistent moral response to the plight of another.[64] The moral hero's life, however, is not typically marked by the same degree of consistency and constancy, and yet, in certain situations of moral concern he responds with extraordinary compassion (courage, integrity, etc.).

As I see it, in those situations, the hero's project of being for-himself (i.e., the day-to-day pursuit of his own well-being) is interrupted by the facing of the other -- in the case of heroic compassion, by a particular situation of

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[63] Consistency is meant here as a relative term. Obviously, one need not (indeed, cannot) manifest all of the virtues all of the time; however, the attribute of moral sainthood is, on my view, rightly reserved for those who possess and exhibit an unusually high degree of overall integrity and virtue.

[64] Again, I am using consistency here not in the Kantian sense of sameness, but rather to suggest that the moral saint is one who can (characteristically) be expected to respond to the suffering of another.

(immediate) suffering. At the crucial moment of moral perception, the (potential) hero finds he can neither dismiss ethical responsibility for the other nor transfer it to a third party. For rescuer Otto Springer, "The hand of compassion was faster than the calculus of reason" (in Fogelman, 1994, p. 57). In other words, in the heroic act, 'I' disengages from the project of 'me', "from its egotism of a being persevering in its being, *to answer for the other*" (Levinas, 1994, p. 125). For both the moral hero and the moral saint, "ethics disturbs the complacency of being" (Cohen, 1985, p. 10). However, on my view, the moral saint's being is a sustained ethic of being-for-the-other, whereas the moral hero's being is one that is informed by a particular conception of morality within which the interruption of egoism, elicited by the other's face, makes ethical responsibility for that other possible.

As Blum suggests, the moral hero is often motivated by a "moral project" or the "bringing about of great good or preventing a great evil" (1994, p. 76). This was clearly the case with rescuer Oskar Schindler (see above) and is also apparent in the words of Danish rescuer Svend Aage Holm-Sorenson,[65] who, upon being asked whether his rescue

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[65] Fogelman's description of Holm-Sorenson (1994, pp. 296-297) is insufficient to properly determine whether the attribute of moral saint or moral hero is most appropriate; however, this rescuer's concise articulation of a moral project clearly illustrates the kind of motivation characteristic of the moral hero that I mean to bring out here.

efforts were worth all the inherent risks and losses, replied:

> My answer is still the same: Yes. Because without freedom, life is *nothing. Never, never,* do I want to live -- or have those I love live -- in hate, fear, and suppression. And *yes, yes,* I would do it again. And again and again (in Fogelman, 1994, p. 297).[66]

In contrast to both the moral hero and moral saint, the egoist is characterized by "being that wants only to persevere in [its own project of] being" (Cohen, 1985, p. 12). One might argue that the moral 'bystander' also fits this description.[67] However, such an analysis is beyond the scope of this inquiry.

FLOURISHING AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE OTHER

As discussed above in Chapters 2 and 3, an argument for unconditional responsibility and being for-the-other is in no way an appeal to slave morality or self-denial; the requirement of sustained subjectivity means seeing both the other's freedom, purposes, and well-being, and one's own, as distinct but of equal worth. Hampton too argues for subjectivity as fundamental to altruism:[68]

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[66] Holm-Sorenson's moral project of 'freedom' (i.e., social or political liberty) is clearly not connected to the existential notions of freedom and free-will referred to elsewhere in this document.

[67] See Blum (1994); Fogelman (1994); Monroe et al. (1990); and Oliner & Oliner (1988).

[68] Hampton describes genuine altruism in terms of a particular kind of "authentic love" (1993, p. 158) which I will elaborate below.

> Commendable, effective love does not mean losing oneself in a union with others; instead, it presupposes that all parties to the union have a self, which they understand to be important, and which they share with one another (1993, p. 160).

My interpretation of effective being for-the-other calls for (the pursuit of) flourishing in each subject; it demands that each one take very seriously the nurture and refinement of his or her own skills and talents so that one's being for-the-other is a being of the highest possible degree. However, I would also argue that for the moral saint a self-focused notion of her own flourishing is never the primary goal, but rather that her identity (and thus the flourishing of her particular human life) requires being for-the-other prior to being for-herself, which marks, in Levinas' words, "a new way of understanding the possibility of an I" (1994, p. 35). This is admittedly an unpopular idea, and will seem to some to be inherently contradictory or, at the very least, naive. I contend, however, that a notion of flourishing for-the-other is usually misunderstood and is yet in its infancy in terms of a fully developed ethical theory.[69]

Before carrying my argument any further, there is a crucial qualification, mentioned above in Chapter 2, that needs to be highlighted here. As Badhwar notes, there are

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[69] I cannot adequately develop this approach to flourishing here, but will present some brief suggestions as to its worth in terms of the compassionate life, and address potential implications for moral education in Chapter 5, below.

those who choose to lead a self-sacrificial life, who have "abdicated or never developed [their] own independent judgment and ends" (1993, p. 117). Seeing only *others* as ends in themselves, and herself simply as a means to their ends (Ibid.), such an individual lacks the subjectivity necessary, on my view, for genuine altruism. This characterization is one particularly instructive example of what Wolf has in mind in her negative portrayal of the moral saint (1982); however, to me, such a life is clearly incompatible with any conception of a fully flourishing life, and is thus also incompatible with moral sainthood.[70] Hampton makes the point even more emphatically, asserting that:

> The challenge is to develop a conception of morality that recognizes the importance of beneficent involvement in others' lives, but which not only 'leaves room' for the development of one's self, but also makes that development a moral requirement (1993, p. 146).

As I have stated throughout this document, I hold to a view of the essential equality of worth of all human beings and a conception of the good that includes the full flourishing of all.[71] It follows then that, within this conception, one's flourishing would require a morality and a code of ethical conduct that recognizes and accepts the

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[70] See also Hampton (1993, p. 136).

[71] There are arguably other worthy conceptions of a morally good life, but for the purposes of this inquiry I will limit my discussion to the compassionate life as lived by the compassionate one.

unique needs of each individual.[72] As Nussbaum argues, the moral emotion of compassion is essential to such a life (1996); for, according to Rousseau, "To see [the other's suffering] without feeling it is not to know it" (cited in Nussbaum, 1996, p. 38). It is only through the vivid imagination of another's situation (which may differ vastly from one's own) that one can begin to understand what might be meant, e.g., by a just allocation of resources (Ibid., p. 53).[73] In other words, as suggested above, at the moment of moral perception, vivid imagination of the other's suffering disturbs the complacency of one's being:

> Equipped with her general conception of human flourishing, the spectator looks at a world in which people suffer hunger, disability, disease, slavery, through no fault of their own or beyond their fault. In her pity she acknowledges that goods such as food, health, citizenship, freedom, do all matter (Ibid., p. 36).

Badhwar cites the lives and moral actions of the rescuers studied by Monroe et al. (1990), and Oliner & Oliner (1988) to argue for a particular kind of flourishing life that is at once self-interested and fully altruistic (1993); and I concur with her analysis that the integrity of

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[72] This is particularly relevant in terms of Diamond's, Levinas', and my own understanding of moral obligation as extending to all who have a human life to lead, regardless of circumstantial differences. See also Hampton (1993, p. 156).

[73] See also Vetlesen (1994).

one's identity is vital to the flourishing life.[74] Indeed, the compassionate one is one who lives a compassionate life, and the whole of a life can only be judged as compassionate as it is lived by one who is compassionate.

My central concern throughout this document has been to present the compassionate life as not only compatible with the fully flourishing life, but to suggest that, properly understood, i.e., as a particular expression of intersubjective relationship, compassion offers unique potential for the fulfilment of such flourishing. Simultaneously holding in mind the claims that compassion requires a concurrent awareness of oneself and the other, *and* that compassion (as an altruistic emotion) is fundamentally other-regarding, is such a thesis defensible? In other words, are these two conditions for compassion contradictory or complementary? I shall argue for the latter, and suggest that flourishing as being for-the-other is both possible and morally commendable.[75]

As Hampton suggests, the kind of morality espoused by Gilligan's "Jake" (in *In a different voice*, 1982), when fully fleshed out, is quite seriously deficient (1993). Briefly, Jake's is a morality of noninterference in which

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[74] As discussed above in Chapters 2 and 3, in the case of the compassionate one, his or her identity is most clearly marked by an irreducible self-perception as part of a common humanity.

[75] By this I mean both flourishing *for*-the-other, and flourishing *as a result of* being for-the-other.

the agent's own development is of primary importance, and the other (and her development) only of concern to the extent that she impacts on one's own self-gratification (pp. 145-146). Two significant and detrimental effects of this conception are: a) that "it discourages us from recognizing and coming to the aid of those who are in need," and b) that it "misleads us about the extent to which any of us can satisfy his or her own desires without the help and support of others" (Ibid.).[76] However, due to the requirement of sustained subjectivity for genuine altruism, "Amy's" potentially self-sacrificing morality is also clearly lacking (Ibid.).[77] How then can one arrive at an understanding of the compassionate life -- a being-for-the-other and suffering-with-the-other -- that does not jeopardize the agency of the compassionate one?

On Hampton's view, and my own, the personal sacrifices inherent to some acts of altruism (e.g., the ensuing poverty, illness, anguish, and life-threatening situations endured by many rescuers), are not sacrifices of the self. Rather, given the Jews' intolerable situations of suffering, the rescuers' sacrifices (while often tragic) were authentic

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[76] As Hampton notes, some may find "unpleasant" the reminder of one's essential vulnerability and dependence on others -- most noticeably, but certainly not exclusively, in infancy and old age (1993, p. 146). See also Wong (in French et al., 1988).

[77] See Gilligan (1982) for her full conception of two (gender-based) moral voices.

and necessary in terms of their response to that suffering, and to their own identity as part of a common humanity (Hampton, 1993, p. 157).

Obviously, such a self-perception is not simply an idea; however, neither is it a sentimental feeling. It is a profound recognition of the shared condition of human-being, of the essential interrelatedness of all who have a human life to lead.[78] For Hampton, it is a kind of "love that connects us to our fellow human beings by virtue of our common humanity, such that we will naturally recoil at others' suffering and desire (authentically) to stop it" (Ibid., p. 158); and therefore:

> [W]hen we commend real altruists, we celebrate not only the authenticity of their choices, but also the point of view they have (authentically) adopted that has resulted in them wanting to make such choices...[and] [w]hen we commend the acts of such altruists, we are actually commending *these people*, and the point of view they took toward their fellow human beings (Ibid., p. 159).[79]

It is readily apparent, after even a brief encounter

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[78] See Footnote 4, Chapter 2.

[79] While an analysis of the egoistic agent is beyond the scope of this thesis, Hampton provides an excellent discussion concerning those who feel no love for others, and consequently refuse to help those in need. Briefly, she suggests that even though their refusal to help is authentic, moral criticism of such individuals is appropriate because they do not perceive their connection to other human beings "from which such help would inevitably spring" (1993, pp. 159-160fn).

with the rescuers' narratives,[80] that Wolf's characterization of moral saints (1982) is seriously flawed. On Blum's view, and my own, the moral saint's life is indeed a flourishing life; and sustained compassion as a trait of character in no way precludes enjoyment of the full spectrum of human emotion and experience.[81] However, just as the compassionate one is not, as Wolf would suggest, bland or always nice (1982), neither is his life an easy life: the compassionate one suffers with stranger and loved one, victim and perpetrator alike. And his self-perception as part of a common humanity compels him, beyond kinship and beyond any consideration of personal security and comfort, to respond to the suffering one who faces. The very subjectivity and integrity of identity required for a flourishing life are what expose the compassionate one to the suffering of the other and invoke his existential position of responsibility for that other.

But whence does compassion come? How is it that six year old Ruby Bridges[82] braved the raging mob outside her school day after day for nearly a year, and yet one day paused, turned to the angry protesters, and prayed for them?

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[80] See Blum (1994); Fogelman (1994); Monroe et al. (1990); and Oliner & Oliner (1988).

[81] See Blum (1994, pp. 89-94) for an insightful critique of Wolf which I will not repeat here.

[82] Ruby Bridges was the first black student to attend New Orleans' William Frantz Elementary School, in 1960 (see Fraser, 1996).

And how is it that Alex Roslan's son, Jurek, after contracting scarlet fever from one of the family's young Jewish charges, Sholom, opted to take only half of his medication while in hospital, hiding the rest, together with notes on his treatment, to send home with his mother to help Sholom? (Fogelman, 1994, p. 109). Such questions appeal to issues of moral education, an essential, yet often neglected aspect of moral theory; and thus I now turn my attention specifically to what it might mean to nurture the capacity for compassion in children.

CHAPTER V

ON NURTURING COMPASSION IN CHILDREN

In these remaining pages, I will explore what it might mean to nurture the capacity for compassion in children, for, as Nussbaum says:

> [W]ithout a compassionate training of the imagination, we will not [have] a compassionate nation. ...[W]e will not have the insight required if we are to make life somewhat less tragic for those who...are hungry, and oppressed, and in pain (1996, p. 58).

My intention, however, is not to make a case for moral education as a separate discipline nor to promote a specific method or curriculum, but rather to suggest that a compassionate education and an education toward a compassionate life together offer unique potential for what might be called an intersubjective pedagogy.[83]

Consistent with Fogelman (1994), and Monroe et al. (1990), I maintain that the capacity for compassion rests irreducibly on a self-perception as part of a common humanity, and that nurturing that capacity in others requires the conscious and careful cultivation of a notion of human-being compatible with Diamond's, i.e., as extending to all who have a human life to lead and all whose fate is a human fate (in Cockburn, 1991, p. 59). The shared condition

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[83] Although much of what I will be discussing here comes from recent writings on character education, the details of particular program implementation are beyond the scope of this inquiry. See, e.g., Delattre & Russell (1993); Lickona (1991); and the various writings of Kevin Ryan (Boston University Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character).

of human-being is what connects us to one another in a relationship of pre-ontological proximity and ethical responsibility for the other; and it is the recognition and fulfilment of such, I contend, that facilitates full flourishing as a human being. I am suggesting, therefore, that an education in and toward compassion, which is marked by the awakening and development of the moral attitude (and concomitant acts) of suffering-with-the-other, is an education in which human-being itself is uniquely affirmed in each (human) subject.

A MORAL FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATION

In contrast to the more traditional view of morality, i.e., as concerned with good and bad, right and wrong, Vetlesen's definitions of morality as "the full mutual recognition of all human subjects," and immorality as dehumanization, or "the acted-on nonrecognition of humans by humans," (1994, p. 242) hold particular significance for this discussion. The only way one can acquire morality, Vetlesen suggests, is through experience -- by "open[ing] oneself to the experience that the other is a human too" (Ibid.). I will return to this deceptively simple suggestion below, considering its specific implications for compassion and moral education.

The origin and development of "pro-social" behaviour has long puzzled researchers in both the humanities and

natural sciences. From his extensive work on empathy, Hoffman has developed a "scheme for the development and transformation of empathic distress" in response to the suffering of another, suggesting a process of moral growth from the innate reaction of personal self-distress in infancy through four progressive phases toward sympathetic concern for others (or compassion) emerging in late childhood and early adolescence (in Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987).[84] Hoffman's analysis is most helpful in terms of unfolding the complexities of moral judgment and response, and the interplay of moral principles and moral emotions. However, since Monroe found that the kind of altruism displayed by the rescuers appears neither to conform to the patterns for development of [other] ethical behavior (1991, pp. 424-425) nor to require (traditional) empathy (Ibid., p. 426), Hoffman's approach seems more appropriately applied to the development of fair-mindedness, honesty, loyalty, trustworthiness, etc., than to compassion. That is, the disposition toward general benevolence which characterizes the rescuers is not seen to be causally connected to social or cognitive maturity: "[Their] altruistic behavior was evident at an early age and remained constant throughout

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[84] For other developmental approaches to morality, see e.g., Kohlberg, L. (1984). *Essays on moral development*. New York: Harper and Row; and Maslow, A.H. (1962). *Toward a psychology of being*. Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand.

life" (Ibid., p. 425).[85] Therefore, Monroe concludes, the psychosocial models of moral development which seem to reasonably explain and predict other forms of pro-social behaviour are ineffective as predictors of altruism.

Like Hoffman, Gilligan sees the capacity for empathy as grounded in an innate predisposition; but rather than focusing on a process of continual development from a primitive and involuntary response toward reasoned moral maturity, she asks: "What experiences might be present in the lives of those who lose these sensibilities?" (in Kagan & Lamb, 1987, pp. 299-300). In other words, as Vetlesen puts it, human destructiveness in general arises as a secondary phenomenon only when the primary faculty of empathy fails (1994, p. 267). So, for Gilligan, as for me, the key question is "not how do moral 'selves' develop, but what might be the developmental moments in relationships which both promote and threaten moral progress" (in Kagan & Lamb, 1987, p. 301).

COMPASSION AND AN INTERSUBJECTIVE PEDAGOGY

Full development of the concept of an intersubjective pedagogy is beyond the scope of this inquiry, however, I will explore here the salient aspect of suffering-with-the-other as an approach to (moral) education.

As I argued above in Chapter 4, a life of unconditional

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[85] See also Fogelman (1994).

responsibility for the other, such as that exhibited by the rescuers and other moral saints, is entirely consistent with a fully flourishing human life. That is, in agreement with Levinas, I see being-for-the-other as "a new way of understanding the possibility of an I" (1994, p. 35); it is to "see [one's] individuality as developed by rather than threatened by responsibility and commitment to others" (Lickona, 1991, p. 107).

Seeking to determine the origin of the rescuers' exemplary moral behaviour, Fogelman found a single unifying theme which is consistent with Monroe's analysis of the moral motivation and cognitive framework of altruists compared to other agents (1991):[86]

> In talking with rescuers from all kinds of different homes, I found that one quality above all others was emphasized time and again: a familial acceptance of people who were different. This value was the centerpiece of the childhood of rescuers and became the core from which their rescuer self evolved. From the earliest ages, rescuers were taught by their parents that people are inextricably linked to one another. No one person or group was better than any other. The conviction that all people, no matter how marginal, are of equal value was conveyed to children of both religious and nonreligious households (Fogelman, 1994, p. 259).

This finding is crucial to understanding the nurture of compassion in children particularly in light of Monroe's discovery that "altruism does not necessarily correspond to the standard patterns of development for [other] ethical behavior" (1991, p. 425). It suggests that deliberate

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[86] See also Deigh (1995); and Monroe et al. (1990).

cultivation of the notion of a common humanity and a concomitant self-perception is essential to an education which takes compassion seriously.

I have maintained throughout this inquiry that compassion is a complex interplay of both emotion and cognition.[87] As Nussbaum says, compassion is "not a matter of the heart alone, if that means being devoid of thought" (1996, p. 49); and, likewise, moral judgment "that does not employ the intelligence of compassion in coming to grips with the significance of human suffering is blind and incomplete" (Ibid.). Kupperman sees the interplay of emotion and cognition as a mutual informing of character and moral theory which is necessary so that moral "kindness" does not lead one toward the mere "comfort, but not toward respecting the dignity, of those who are worst off" (in French et al., 1988, p. 122). He claims that:

> the moral pioneers who helped to change general thinking on such matters as slavery, the subjection of women, or the entitlements of the very poor had, at the least, theory-like elements in their thinking. They saw that all of the moral considerations that applied to whites also applied to blacks, that those which were applicable to men were applicable to women, and that the general thrust toward the prevention of misery which links many elements of familiar morality had special relevance to the plight of the very poor (Ibid.).[88]

With a self-perception as part of a common humanity, I

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[87] See Blum (1980; 1994); Noddings (1984); Nussbaum (1990; 1996); and Vetlesen (1994).

[88] I would also add to Kupperman's list the suffering of the physically and mentally disabled.

contend, one is more readily able to discern situations of suffering, injustice, and intolerance; and one's response of suffering-with-the-other is at once a cognitive and affective recognition of one's existential position of responsibility for the other. However, as noted above in Chapter 4, and contrary to Wolf's characterization (1982), a life of sustained being for-the-other is neither dull nor humourless, nor is it a self-sacrificial life:

> The human body with its sensibility is...not an exclusively altruistic possibility. As directed toward others it also enjoys earthly satisfactions and pleasures. The appeal to responsibility is heard by someone who already has been immersed in an ocean of lust and pains. Even after the discovery of other-directed responsibility, enjoyment still remains a necessity. Indeed, what could I offer the others, if it were not in any respect pleasant? Or what could I give, if I did not know by experience how good it feels to receive these gifts? (Peperzak, in Dallery & Scott, p. 18).[89]

A full education, then, and a fully moral education (consistent with Vetlesen's use of that term) would be one which recognizes, values, and seeks the full subjectivity of all human beings, and is characterized by a balance of intellectual, ethical, and aesthetic growth.[90] Nussbaum emphasizes the role of the humanities and the arts in moral education, citing their potential for cultivating the kind of imagination required for compassion (1996, p. 50):

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[89] See also Blum (1994); Delattre & Russell (1993, p. 36); and Sherman (1988, p. 101).

[90] See also Delattre & Russell (1993, p. 37); and Walker ([n.d.], p. 60).

> Our pupil must learn to appreciate the diversity of circumstances in which human beings struggle for flourishing; this means not just learning some facts about classes, races, nationalities, and sexual orientations other than her own, but being drawn into those lives through the imagination, becoming a participant in those struggles (Ibid., p. 51).

Thus, a genuinely compassionate education includes not only the development of a specifically moral sensibility, but also a sense of participation in the world (as an expression of one's unique subjectivity), and a view of one's ethical responsibility for the other as a recognition of the inherent value and intersubjective nature of human-being.[91]

COMPASSION IN THE CLASSROOM

The present situation in schools and the wider community, however, often reflects a much different and rather disturbing picture -- an apparent unravelling of the social fabric.[92] Noddings expresses a concern, shared by

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[91] A note on the situation of those who suffer from physical and/or mental disabilities is warranted here. For Diamond, as for me, the domain of the moral extends to all whose fate is a human fate, "however incomprehensible we may find it" (Diamond, in Cockburn, 1991, p. 55). This view is obviously contrary to Kant, who limits moral consideration to those capable of rational thought, but is also a somewhat subtle departure from those, such as Rorty (cited in Diamond, 1991), who argue for seeing the handicapped as essentially *like* others, and therefore (*because* of this perceived similarity) worthy of moral consideration. As I see it, however, consistent with Diamond, the shared condition of human-being is pre-essential, and not contingent on any sense of sameness.

[92] Lickona suggests that this situation is an inevitable result of the selfishness which accompanied the rise of personalism in the 1960s and 1970s -- a kind of

(continued...)

many, that the current model of schooling has produced relatively affluent citizens who are unwilling to address the vast contrast in education for the rich and the poor (1992, p. 43).[93] As she notes, there is obviously something seriously wrong with a model which results in a morally deficient schooling for all (Ibid.); and, on her view, the only alternative is a radical restructuring toward schooling based on an ethic of care (1984; 1992; 1995).

Consistent with Vetlesen's suggestion that the only way one can acquire morality is by "open[ing] oneself to the experience that the other is a human too" (1994, p. 242), Richard Curwin presents a compelling argument for deliberately incorporating altruism into education, suggesting a direct connection between being-for-the-other and full human flourishing (1993).[94]

Curwin's proposal is based on experience with children designated 'at-risk' (Ibid.); however, in contrast to many programs for these students, his model is not primarily

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[92](...continued)
individualism that "celebrated the worth, dignity, and autonomy of the individual person, including the subjective self or inner life of the person," and which emphasized rights over responsibility and freedom over commitment (1991, p. 9).

[93] Citing Kozol (1991), Noddings points out that "[p]oor children lack safe and decent school facilities, encounter watered-down curricula, and receive inadequate instruction" (1992, p. 43).

[94] See also Bricker's argument for collaborative learning as necessary to the full development of autonomy (1989, pp. 48-55).

designed to increase self-esteem, but rather reflects a deeper concern for their overall well-being and moral development. As such, integrity and authenticity are of central importance. The opportunities for altruistic engagement, he insists, must address a genuine need, and expectations must be reasonable and consistent with the child's abilities. Curwin cites the example of a fourth grade student from a deeply disturbed home, who was verbally abusive, violent, and already drinking heavily in times of stress (Ibid., p. 36). "Bill" was made responsible for assisting a wheelchair-bound first grader on and off the bus everyday, and for being her protector, with the sole stipulation that if he got into a fight, he could not help the younger child for the rest of the day. Albeit very gradually, and with frequent lapses, Bill's teachers and counsellors noticed that his behaviour and attitude, both in and outside school, changed quite dramatically (Ibid.).[95] It might surprise some that Curwin opposes praising the helper (especially in public) for his altruistic acts (Ibid., p. 37); however Curwin's rationale supports David Dewhurst's argument for (self-)acceptance and the development of "a type of self-confidence which will enable [the student] to function independently of the opinions of

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[95] See also, e.g., Lickona (1991) for other documented examples of altruism integrated into the curriculum and school culture in general.

others" (1991, p. 10).[96]

Curwin argues that the current model of schooling -- marked both by its competitive nature and compensatory programs for lower achievers -- serves only to perpetuate a culture of comparison, resulting in repeated failure and feelings of inadequacy and worthlessness for some. "One way to break this cycle," he claims, "is to actualize the basic human need to be altruistic" (1993, p. 36).

In her argument for compassion as the basic social emotion, Nussbaum offers strategies to support an education consistent with that view (1996, p. 50). Primarily, she says, "public education at every level should cultivate the ability to imagine the experiences of others and to participate in their sufferings" (Ibid.). Connected to Deigh's discussion of empathy (1995), Nussbaum states that part of the ethical strength of compassion is its "ability to cross boundaries of class, nationality, race, and gender" (1996, p. 51); thus, an education in compassion plays a vital role in recognizing the difference between "vulnerabilities common to all human beings and those constructed for the powerless by the empowered" (Ibid., p. 41).

Central to Noddings' concept of moral education is a contention (with which I agree) that everything one does as

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[96] I will return to Dewhurst's suggestions below, in considering Noddings' component of 'confirmation'.

a teacher has moral overtones (1984, p. 179). Alfie Kohn and others[97] describe this as the hidden, or unexamined curriculum:

> The teacher's presence and behavior, her choice of text, the order in which she presents ideas, and her tone of voice are as much part of the lesson as the curriculum itself. So, too, is a teacher's method of discipline or classroom management saturated in values, regardless of whether those values are transparent to the teacher. In short, to arrange our schools so that caring, sharing, helping, and empathizing are actively encouraged is not to introduce values into a neutral environment; it is to examine the values already in place and to consider trading them in for a new set (Kohn, 1991, p. 499).

This point is crucial in that, to me, morality is both the source and substance of human-being; it is not merely episodically relevant. On my view, as on Levinas', ethics precedes being, and therefore every encounter with another is already an ethical encounter.[98]

Thomas Lickona's analysis and argument for values education finds its roots in the tradition of character education, and aims primarily to teach respect and responsibility in both attitude and act (1991). Lickona sees the classroom as a moral community in which the students concurrently receive, develop, and practise respect and responsibility; and central to his approach is an "ethic of interdependence" based on the notion of a common humanity:

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[97] See also, e.g., Bricker (1989); and Lickona (1991, p. 20).

[98] See also the discussion on flourishing and responsibility for the other, in Chapter 4, above.

> Developing the responsibility dimension of moral community also means fostering an ethic of interdependence -- the feeling that one person's problem is everybody's problem. This is a time-honored moral value that gains expression in the belief that we are all in the same boat, and, since we share the same vulnerable human condition, we bear a measure of responsibility for each other's welfare (1991, p. 105).

Noddings' model for care-based schooling, which is generally compatible with Lickona's approach, and with an education in and toward compassion,[99] comprises four major components: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation (1984; 1992; 1995). These components are also clearly evident in Fogelman's composite characterization of the childhood experiences of most rescuers:

> ...a nurturing, loving home; an altruistic parent or beloved caretaker who served as a role model for altruistic behavior; a tolerance for people who were different; a childhood illness or personal loss that tested their resilience and exposed them to special care; and an upbringing that emphasized independence, competence, discipline with explanations (rather than physical punishment or withdrawal of love), and caring (1994, p. 254).

The significance of modeling in moral development (i.e., demonstrating the desired attitudes and behaviour in day-to-day interactions) is reflected in Fogelman's discovery that a full 89% of the rescuers she interviewed had a parent or other adult figure who served as an altruistic role model (Ibid., p. 263). In Edwin Delattre and William Russell's analysis (1993), modeling is described as the "genuine integrity" one finds in a school or home that

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[99] See also Curwin (1993); Delattre & Russell (1993); Greer (1993); and Kohn (1991).

takes character seriously, and in the adults who are responsible for it (p. 39).

Connected to the need for moral models, Lickona claims that "[t]he most basic form of moral education is the treatment we receive" (1991, p. 72); and, according to Noddings, "[t]he capacity to care may be dependent on adequate experience in being cared for" (1992, p. 22). These suggestions parallel those of Max Horkheimer, who says that "one has to have been the object of love in order to become its subject" (quoted in Vetlesen, 1994, p. 259), and sociologist Eli Sagan, who contends that "love is not the result, but the foundation of conscience" (quoted in Fogelman, 1994, p. 255).[100] In terms of character development, Delattre and Russell, like Curwin (1993), extend this emphasis on modeling and received caring to include both the other-directed nature of caring and a causal connection between altruism and one's own flourishing:

> [T]o care for something or someone, we must invest ourselves -- our time, energy, decisions, and actions -- in their well-being. There is nothing idle in this investment, and caring for others cannot be separated from willingness to sacrifice for their sake. ...In our intentions and the actions they inspire, in the enterprise of caring for those we love and those who need us, we give meaning to our lives. In caring for others we define ourselves, and we escape the barrenness of life in which nothing and no one matter enough to us to be worthy of our sacrifices (Delattre & Russell, 1993, pp. 41-42).

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[100] See also Fogelman (1994, p. 270); Lickona (1991, p. 30); and Vetlesen (1994, p. 259).

Noddings' second component, dialogue, is important in that it not only makes values explicit, but also provides a forum for interpretation, reflection, and critique (1995, pp. 190-191). Her understanding of the dialogic relation in education is primarily based on the writings of Martin Buber (cited in Noddings, 1984; and 1995, pp. 64-65), in which dialogue is seen as:

> a form of dialectic...[through which] we are led beyond the intense and particular feelings accompanying our own deeply held values, and beyond the particular beliefs to which these feelings are attached, to a realization that the other -- who feels intensely about that which I do not believe -- is still one to be received (1984, p. 186).[101]

The third component, practice (i.e., the opportunity for meaningful application of moral concepts and emotions), is also essential to full moral development:

> As children, many rescuers were not just encouraged but were expected to help others. When a neighbor was ill or a school friend was in trouble, rescuers reported that their parents took it as a matter of course that they would help (Fogelman, 1994, p. 265).

However, as a component of moral education, Noddings says, practice requires careful and thoughtful planning (1992, p. 24). Unfortunately, it is all too frequently imposed, in the form of a "community service requirement" or the like, onto an existing (and incompatible) educational model. Without the companion aspects of modeling and dialogue, efforts to

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[101] See Greer (1993); and Lickona (1991) for several excellent examples of moral growth through oral and written dialogue in the classroom. See also Buber (1947); and Noddings (1992).

reverse the current trend toward increasing violence, apathy, substance abuse, etc., through enforced programs of community service, however well-intentioned, are destined to meet with mixed results at best (Noddings, 1995, p. 191; Curwin, 1993).[102]

"Children learn morality by living it," Lickona claims (1991, p. 90); and thus, successful teaching of respect and responsibility requires that teachers "make the development of a classroom moral community a central educational objective" (Ibid.). Within the classroom there is ongoing opportunity for students to:

> interact, form relationships, work out problems, grow as a group, and learn directly, from their first-hand social experience, lessons about fair play, cooperation, forgiveness, and respect for the worth and dignity of every individual (Ibid.).

Such practical grounding in school, and ideally in the home, he suggests, enables children to develop a generalized social awareness of the human condition, come to identify compassionately with all human beings, and grow toward caring and responsible moral maturity (Ibid., p. 304).

Both Lickona's approach to character education and David Bricker's argument for cooperation based on the "ideal motive" of generosity (1989) cite experience in collaborative learning as vital to full moral development.

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[102] Curwin (1993); Kohn (1991); and Lickona (1991) all offer models and specific educational strategies for successfully incorporating altruism into schooling, with potential implications for teachers and students alike.

However, in Bricker's conception, one is motivated to develop and refine one's talents and virtues primarily in order to move closer to an idealized vision of oneself (within which such elements inhere) (Ibid., p. 77) -- a view which, upon closer scrutiny, could suggest an essentially self-interested motive. In contrast, an ethic of unconditional responsibility for the other, with its notion of pre-ontological proximity and ethical debt, holds an inescapable responsibility to cultivate one's virtues and natural abilities primarily in order that the other might flourish.

Connected to Bricker's argument, Noddings' final component, 'confirmation', is a process whereby one reveals to the other "an attainable image of himself that is lovelier than that manifested in his present acts" (1984, p. 193), and is accomplished in concert with dialogue and practice. That is, confirmation involves speaking with and engaging the other in cooperative practice toward the vision of a better self (Ibid., p. 196; 1992, p. 25).

Confirmation seems to imply something like the deliberate cultivation of self-esteem. However, there is a confusion running through much current thought on self-esteem (i.e., the erroneous conceptual linking of equality of worth and sameness) which serves only to cloud the real issue. In agreement with Dewhurst (1991), I would argue that it is only by transcending the entire framework of

comparison in connection with self-esteem that one might arrive at a meaningful understanding of the inherent value of human-being and a concomitant self-perception. I maintain that one's essential worth as a human being is irrefutable; however, so long as self-esteem is based on performance of any kind, competition seems inevitable, and one person's self-confidence will necessarily be at the expense of another's (Wilson, 1989, p. 30).

Noddings' concept of confirmation is also connected to the second aspect of modeling (see above) -- a recognition of the basic human need to be loved and cared for -- and requires a relationship of trust and integrity in which the teacher (or one-caring) is perceived by the student (the cared-for) as credible and trustworthy, and as having a genuine investment in his or her well-being, moral development, and flourishing. In terms of compassion, and particularly as we move toward integrating a wider spectrum of children into the educational mainstream, teachers and students alike can come to recognize both the other's uniqueness and his or her suffering as that of a fellow human being, and therefore as one's own immediate moral concern and responsibility.

COMPASSION BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Blum, Noddings, Nussbaum, and others suggest that an education in and toward altruism is essential to full moral

development; yet many educators and parents, feeling overwhelmed by current statistics on poverty, violence, and disease in the world, avoid cultivating in children a sense of responsibility for the global situation. On my view, however, it is precisely the plight of those suffering others that gives the call for a renewed emphasis on compassion and empowered citizenship its unmistakeable urgency.[103] As Levinas suggests, "[P]erhaps seeking the secret of the human in the ethical structures of proximity is not the equivalent of trying to close one's eyes to [true human] misery" (1994, p. 43). In addition to enabling one to address disturbing situations of moral concern, compassion invokes one's existential position of ethical debt and concomitant responsibility for the other such that one's choices and commitments will reflect a notion of pre-ontological interconnectedness and interdependence. Within such a conception, the suffering other is already one's moral concern and one's responsibility; and with a self-perception as part of a common humanity, one "acknowledges the imperative addressed to one in the susceptibility of the other. *One has to suffer for the others and with the others*" (Lingis, 1994, p. 179, emphasis mine).

Thus, I would say that the capacity for compassion finds its roots in a self-perception as part of a common

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[103] See Lickona (1991) for a detailed analysis and model (including curriculum resources) for educating toward respectful and responsible local and global citizenship.

humanity and its fulfilment in being for-the-other prior to being for-oneself. Yet, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, an ethic of unconditional responsibility for the other is actually an act of freedom -- an investment of one's own freedom in the other (Levinas, 1994, p. 125) -- and a move away from dehumanization toward the full mutual recognition of all human subjects. A life of suffering with the other, I contend, offers unique potential for full flourishing; and in Cohen's words, "The self finds its inexhaustible resources when and only when it is without reserve in the service of the other" (in Dallery & Scott, 1989, p. 43).

It seems only fitting, therefore, to leave the final word to rescuer Hiltgunt Zassenhaus' mother, who, while preparing to trade the last of her possessions on the black market for supplies to sustain political prisoners, said to her anxious daughter: "You must learn to understand that only what you give, you'll have" (quoted in Fogelman, 1994, p. 264).

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